African atrocities
Why Christians participate ..... p. 10

Sound systems
Blessing or curse? ..... p. 12

ICS stays put
Board declines merger ..... p. 20

CHRISTIAN COURIER
A Reformed Weekly

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Group nome a model of co-operation

JESSIE SCHUT

Stephen Van Belle (l.) with housemates Katerina George and Terry Ryan.

Jessie Schut

EDMONTON — Stephen Van Belle is a happy camper. At 27, the young man with Down syndrome is finally living in his own place, a spacious two-storey house called Five Gables that he shares with four other residents.

"I like it a lot," says Stephen enthusiastically as he shows visitors around. "This is *my* home."

His dad, Peter, is delighted, too, but misses his son. The two men had been "batching" together since wife and mom, Weia, died in 1995.

Stephen took good care of his dad, vacuuming, doing the laundry and yard work. But Peter knew it was time for Stephen to find a place of his own the day he said, "Dad, you're too old to live with."

"I hope he meant to say, 'I'm too old to live with you,'" says Van Belle with a smile. At any rate, it was the impetus to begin looking for a change.

In February of 1997, Van Belle approached Rehoboth in Stony Plain, Alberta, a Christian social service agency for persons with mental disabilities. He had very specific criteria in mind for a potential group home for his son.

"Stephen works at Kelsey's Restaurant and the Bibles for Missions Thrift Store," he says. Both of these are only a few blocks from the church, West End Christian Reformed, where he also volunteers and attends Friendship classes. "I wanted a home for Stephen that would be within walking distance of all those places."

Complementary group

Rehoboth put him in touch with other families on their waiting list, and Van Belle also notified his church about his dream. Eventually five families met together to explore possibilities. Four of them were CRC families, three from West End CRC. They decided to socialize a few times to see if their children were compatible, and after a few 'dates' they agreed that their sons and daughters would make good housemates.

Each of the residents, the parents emphasize, has his or her own strengths. Liz Koning, 36, in a wheel chair, is a "social bee," says her mother. Terry Ryan, 32, has epilepsy and cerebral palsy, but is very articulate and eager to learn. Paul Baron, 18, is shy and quiet, but comes out of his shell whenever he has a ball in his hands. Katerina George, 18, is gentle and sweet and loves to color. Stephen is a great housekeeper, able to do dishes, shovel snow and mow the grass.

By bringing the residents together in a home, the parents hoped that these strengths could complement and support each other. They also had a vision for their adult children that included learning new skills and enlarging their world.

Communal effort

"It's interesting seeing how their different personalities come out in this setting," says Van Belle. "I had supper there one night, and Terry said the grace — that's definitely his gift. But after the meal was over, it was Stephen who immediately started cleaning up the dishes. That's his strength."

The families give much credit to the Reformed community in Edmonton for helping the dream come true. When funding for the home was turned down by the provincial Department of Social Services, a committee raised more than $100,000; businesses donated materials and labor, and family and church members donated labor. With decreased housing costs, the government approved the revised budget in September, and by November, building was underway.

The beautiful two-storey *See* **GROUP HOME** *page 3...*

Federal youth strategy criticized by justice professionals

Alan Doerksen

OTTAWA — If you're 14 years old and mug a little old lady at knifepoint, or far worse, kill her after you've grabbed her purse, you could be in very big trouble if Justice Minister Anne McLellan has her way. If McLellan's new youth criminal justice act is passed, you would be tried for those crimes as an adult, though you may just be starting high school.

Canada's Justice Minister wants to replace the Young Offenders Act with a new youth criminal justice act that would lower the age limit to 14 from 16 for which young offenders could be liable for adult sentences. A retired RCMP supervisor officer agrees tougher measures are needed for some young offenders but argues that local solutions are needed instead of a new Young Offenders Act.

McLellan has made proposals for changes in the treatment of young offenders. She was responding to recommendations made by a year-long review of Canada's approach to youth justice conducted by a House of Commons Standing Committee. The Minister expects to introduce new youth criminal justice legislation this fall.

COURTESY MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Justice Minister Anne McLellan

Meaningful consequences

McLellan's recommendations focus on prevention, "meaningful consequences" for youth crime, and public protection. A $32 million per year Crime Prevention Initiative would be aimed at assisting communities

See **GOVERNMENT** *p. 2...*

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News

Government wants tougher action against violent youth

... *continued from page 1*

to develop programs to prevent crime and support youth at risk of becoming involved with crime.

Part of the act would be a response to the recent report by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The government would work to improve living conditions for Canada's native people, who the Justice Department says are "over-represented in the justice system."

The Ministry of Justice also wants tougher action taken against violent young offenders. To accomplish this, it wants to expand the offences for which youth would be liable for adult sentences to include violent crimes besides murder, manslaughter and aggravated sexual assault. New measures would also allow the publication of the names of all young offenders who have been convicted and given an adult sentence.

McLellan also calls for a full range of community-based sentences and other alternatives to the justice system for non-violent offenders that would emphasize responsibility to the victim and community and help youth see a clear connection between a crime and its consequences. Examples of this are restitution and community service orders.

System not working

"The current system is not working as it should in many significant areas," asserts McLellan. "Canadians want a youth justice system that protects society and that helps youth avoid crime or turn their lives around if they do become involved in crime. The government's youth justice strategy will accomplish this."

But Ralph De Groot, a retired RCMP supervisor living in Peterborough, Ont., is not convinced a new youth justice act is the best solution to youth crime. "Yes, the Young Offenders Act needs to be amended," he says. But De Groot would prefer to see more local laws about young offenders, rather than one national law governing widely differing cities and towns across Canada.

De Groot has done police work in places as diverse as Metro Toronto and small-town Nova Scotia. He observes that what one community views as a serious crime might get a very different reaction in another community.

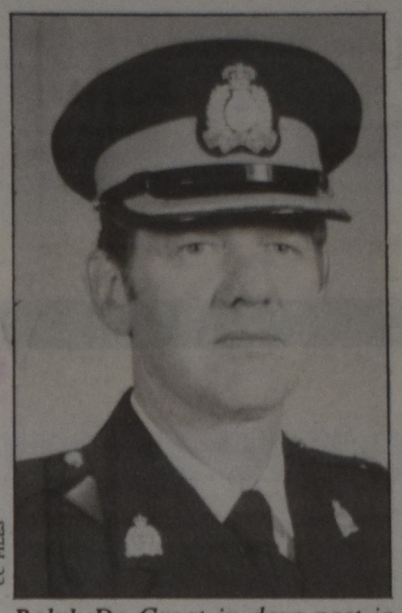
Currently, De Groot is on the Ontario Board of Parole and works with offenders at the Millbrook Correctional Centre, near Peterborough. "I see the products of juvenile delinquency," he asserts. "I have the misfortune of seeing the former juvenile delinquent graduate to big-time crime. The problem is, as I now see it, unless intervention took place at an extremely young age and [was] unforgettable, I will see that offender 'graduate.'"

De Groot describes the proposed Crime Prevention Initiative as "wonderful words. [But] what does it mean in day-to-day life?"

He would like to see more practical suggestions.

De Groot agrees there are too many aboriginal young offenders and favors government measures to help aboriginal communities, but again wants to see concrete examples from the government.

More adult sentences should be given to violent young offenders, De Groot agrees, but adds, "I say that with regret when I say that's necessary." Adult sentences should be given to offenders as young as 14 "with discretion," he cautions. He gives the example of a youth who commits a "home invasion" as being someone who needs an adult sentence.



CC FILES

Ralph De Groot in days past in his RCMP uniform

De Groot believes police officers should be allowed to use more discretion in dealing with young offenders, saying that was the case years ago. The Criminal Code still allows this, but many officers now go to their superiors or to crown attorneys before dealing with a young offender.

De Groot would also like to see churches offer help and education to young offenders. He is a member of Cephas Christian Reformed Church in Peterborough and an occasional contributor to CC.

Police need flexibility

A police officer based in Cambridge, Ont., who requested anonymity, believes the Young Offenders Act needs some changes. He cautiously supports the idea of lowering the adult prosecution age to 14.

He agrees that police officers should have "a certain amount of flexibility" to send young offenders to court or to use other options. "Sometimes problems can be solved with mediation..., sometimes with a simple warning," he says.

Elizabeth Woudsma, a direct care worker with a young offender facility in Kingston, Ont., is critical of some proposed changes to the Young Offenders Act, which she sees as having potential the way it is now.

Woudsma, who has a degree in criminology, works with young offenders aged 12 to 16. She offers "skills development," such as anger management. The focus of her work is "to offer every opportunity to avoid the adult system," she explains.

Like De Groot, Woudsma would like to see more details from the planned Crime Prevention Initiative. If this includes supporting youth centres, she favors it, but if it means setting curfews for young people, she doesn't.

Acting up severely

Woudsma does not approve of the plan to prosecute youth as young as 14 as adults. "I see a lot of what the youth are doing as acting out ... in more severe terms," she observes. "To draw them into adult court makes the community feel safer but doesn't address the needs of the kids."

Allowing publication of young offenders' names is a bad idea, she adds. "It doesn't deter the young people. For those who have been involved with the system, they don't care." But for first-time offenders, "it does more harm than good.... They think, 'My name's out there. Everybody sees me as a young offender.' Publishing the names really makes it difficult for those kids."

Woudsma sees restitution and other alternatives to the court system as being a good solution to youth crime. "I think those are more interactive with the young person. You're confronting the person with what they did.... Their needs are getting attention."

Christians can help keep young people out of crime by volunteering with groups such as Big Brothers or helping to set up structured, supervised drop-in centres for youth, suggests Woudsma, who is a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Kingston.

AMSTERDAM '98

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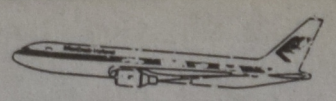

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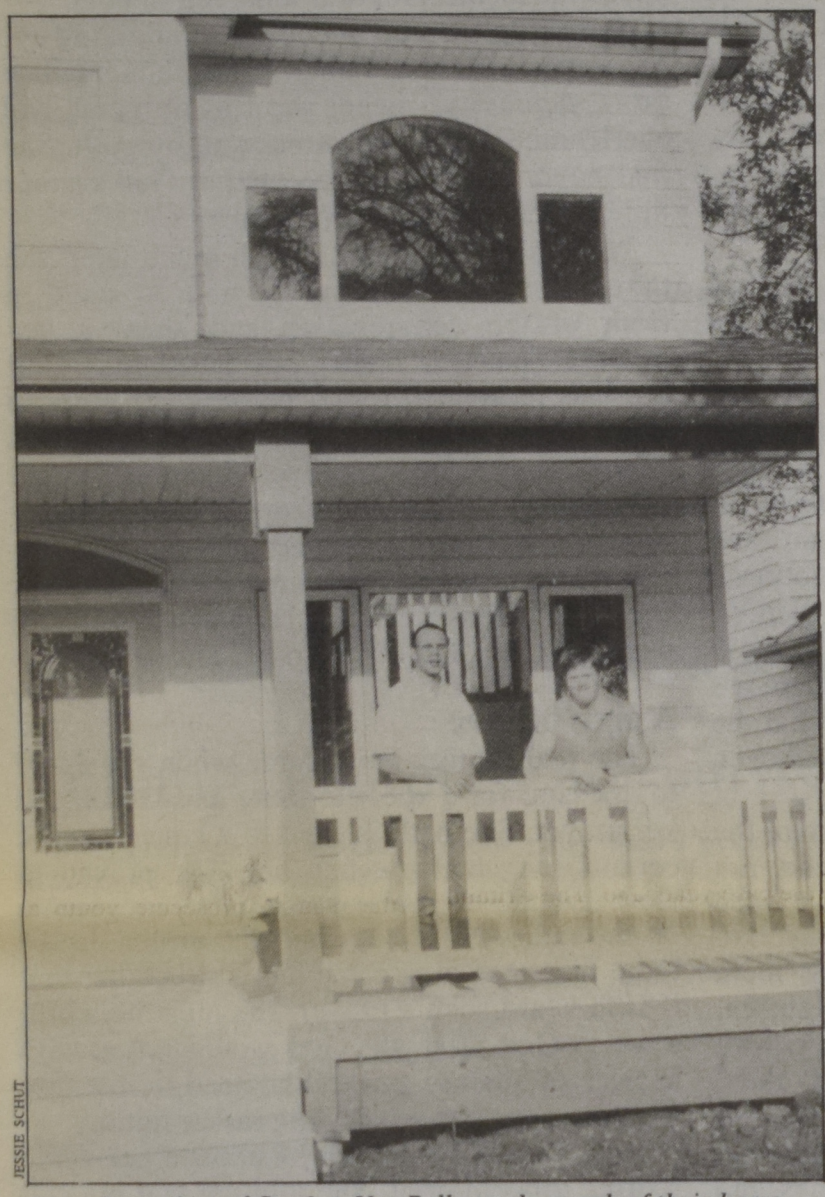
Group home an inspiration for others



JESSIE SCHUT

Terry Ryan (l.) and Stephen Van Belle on the porch of their home.

... continued from page 1

home is located in a residential neighborhood only three blocks from West End church. Elaine Mulder, another member of West End CRC, designed it to accommodate specific needs: a main floor that is totally wheelchair accessible; large closets, including lockers in the basement for each of the residents; a small TV room and a huge family room; a counter, sink and cupboards that Liz, in her wheelchair, can use.

On April 4 the residents moved in. Although parents caution that the initial stage of settling in is a "honeymoon" phase, they're very happy, and more importantly, their children are.

Excitement, camaraderie

"Liz is a lot happier now that she has her own surroundings and more individual attention," says Jetske Koning about her daughter, who moved to the home from an auxiliary hospital. "I'm still in awe — I can hardly believe this has really happened."

Resident Terry Ryan is also excited. Previously he had lived in a basement suite and found the experience very lonely. He had also experienced seizures when he was living alone, and says that living in the group home makes him feel more secure.

"There's always someone around here to talk with when you want to talk," he says. "This is our home, not just a place to stay."

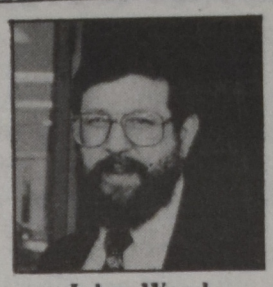
Life has changed, too, for Peter and Stephen Van Belle. Although both father and son were eager for their dream of a home to become a reality, the transition has had some bittersweet moments. Now Peter is the one that's living alone, while his son is surrounded with a community of friends.

"When Stephen knew he was going to move out, he got quite concerned about me," says Peter. "He was even asking people to move in with me so I wouldn't be alone." Still, as he sees Stephen making decisions about his life and enjoying this new stage, Peter knows this is the right choice.

He hopes that Five Gables can become a model and inspiration for others. "If you have four or five families who are committed to making it happen, and an agency like Rehoboth to administer it, and a supportive church community, it can happen anywhere," he says.

Christians and the law: Is it a wild west hold-up?

Creation waits...



John Wood

Bill is a quiet, competent professional. When he does his job well he makes some people very unhappy. Last week he got a stop order in court and prevented a couple from building their dream home. Why would a Christian with an easy smile and warm handshake cause so much pain?

First, it's his job. He works in the Oregon Department of Justice taking people to court when they violate the state's natural resources law. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Bill's work is an expression of his love of the Creator.

But in doing his job well he faces a central question that we all share. What is the proper role of law in caring for creation? This is especially important today as human activities and aspirations come into conflict with the needs of a sound creation.

The state of Oregon is the first in the U.S. to have border-to-border land-use zoning. Every acre of land both private and public is covered under one or more of 12 land-use planning goals. Such a large scale effort is bound to bring conflict, and Bill's job is to help resolve these.

The unhappy couple had hoped to build their dream home in the middle of a large tract of critical big-game winter range. They would gain a beautiful view of the distant mountains and valley below. Game managers had acknowledged that the footprint of a single house might not do much immediate damage. But the cumulative effect of many houses, connecting roads and increased activity in the winter will put the animals at risk.

After a long series of public meetings a sinuous shaped block of land was set aside. Some activities were allowed, but building new roads and a permanent structure were not. Under the law, this couple would not now be permitted to build. In this instance, human aspirations would have to give way to the needs of the creatures.

Looking for justice and balance

But is this fair? That is a question that Canadians are facing, too, in regional land-use planning and endangered species legislation. Recent and pending decisions at several levels of government give Christians in Canada a unique opportunity to speak to these concerns.

So what does Scripture teach us that might alleviate this tension between private desires and public ends?

It was in hopes of answering that question that a room full of lawyers and academics listened as Bill Cook described his experience. "The law is a tool," he noted. And like any instrument it is not perfect. It can be fashioned and used in unjust ways. Sometimes using a legal remedy is simply the end of a long string of failed attempts at avoiding conflict.

"But both Scripture and experience tell us that we are foolish to ignore this tool. The law does not replace affection for people, nor replace affection for place, land, town, creatures. It has little compassion, so we must never forget to act in humility and with compassion.

This land is your land, this land is God's land

Our modern life has uprooted most of us. We often know little of our local setting. Rather, we rely on experts to detail the rules for maintaining environmental integrity.

The biblical stories of land-use conflicts and resolution don't immediately resonate with our experience. But look again. Psalm 24 reminds us of the most basic principle of all human ownership of property. Our Creator God is the owner, we hold this land as a sacred trust.

The decisions we make must balance the legitimate needs of *all* God's creatures.We have many great gifts from God. Gifts not only of land, water, air and creatures, but also of knowledge and insight. We must exercise this trust wisely. Perhaps we should start as the kings of old, and as Bill has today, and study both the law of the land and the law of God.

John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College in Edmonton.

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Editorial

Some of us need to be saved ... from our upbringing

I have heard it said that if you can't talk about your faith, you're not a real Christian. A real Christian bubbles over with what God has done for him or her. Well, if that's true then the Kingdom of heaven belongs to extroverts.

I have also heard it said that unless you know for sure, deep in your heart, that God loves you, you need to be saved, Sister. I acknowledge that lack of assurance stifles growth, but I hesitate to conclude that a spiritual conversion is always required. In some cases what's really needed is an emotional conversion.

The problem with many church-going people is not that they don't love God, but that they have a hard time believing that God loves them. They faithfully attend church, they publicly professed their faith many years ago, they live and act like Christians; but somehow they have a hard time applying the promises of God to themselves. They have no difficulty accepting that God loves other people — the congregation, little children, even prostitutes — but to appropriate that love to the point of saying and feeling: "God loves *me*" can be very hard.

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◆ provide contact for the Christian community.

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I know of an elderly woman who, when she was near death, had a hard time coming to the point of saying "Christ died for me." Yet everything in her life pointed to a Christian walk. Her children all testify to her fine Christian care and love. You would say that one can tell a good tree by its fruits, right? But the woman herself got no comfort from that evidence. Did she need to be saved on her deathbed?

Not at all. I believe that her doubts had more to do with the way she saw herself in the whole scheme of things — in her role as wife, mother, church member and member of society — than it had to do with her eternal salvation. Many elderly people, especially women, were never allowed to see themselves as people whose opinions carried weight and whose feelings were legitimate. They got used to thinking of themselves as lesser beings. "Who am I to deserve attention or praise?" they might think to themselves. From there it's but a small step to saying, "Who am I that the Lord Jesus Christ died for me and loves even me?"

Many of us learned that lesson from the time we were kids. Kids should be seen, not heard, we were told. Babies had to be trained to sleep through the night right away. No pampering by getting up and feeding them when they cried. If two kids were fighting, they both got into trouble, no matter who started it. And if you didn't deserve it then, you would probably deserve it later. A good spanking is never wasted. Thus we learned soon enough that the smaller our psyches, the better people we would become.

In addition to the problem of not having been affirmed enough as children or as adults, there is still a notion in our midst that we should not admit to or express doubts about our faith.

Basking in God's love

People who grew up in that kind of self-diminishing environment need experiences that help them see that they have infinite worth, that they are truly loved and appreciated for who they are. They have to learn to love themselves if they are to believe that God loves them. Self-love is not the same as pride and selfishness. Self-love is the attitude of being comfortable with the person God allows you to be, warts and all. Self-love is the ability to bask in God's love, not because *you* deserve it but because *God* deserves to be acknowledged for loving you.

A young woman in our congregation also had to learn that. All her young life she suffered from a lack of self esteem. At college she used to wonder how other female students could speak in class with such self-confidence, even to the point of interrupting the professor and asking him to clarify what he had just said. That these students could take up such space for themselves was amazing to her.

She had grown up under the scrutinizing eye of a perfectionist father. She thought that "total depravity" meant she was no good, and she learned that motivation came by guilt. She had never learned to accept that God's grace did not depend on her obedience.

When she joined our church much later, she thought she would never be able to stand in front of the congregation and share a testimony. That was totally out of reach ... until she was motivated to act because of someone else's need. Someone she knew and loved was very ill and in need of prayer. She mustered all her courage and stood in front of the congregation one morning and presented that person's need. That was the beginning of change in her life. She discovered that people had actually listened to her and affirmed her afterwards.

A sign of love

The real turning point came when she dared to ask God for a specific thing and God heard her prayer. She had listened to a concert and a certain song had touched her. She prayed to God that she might hear that same song again on the radio. No sooner had she turned on the radio than that song came on. It struck her that if God heard such a prayer, she must be worth a lot to God after all. God would not always answer so quickly, nor did he need to, because the young woman is growing in her faith.

How do I know all this? I phoned her while writing this editorial. She told me that my call had been an answer to another prayer. Worried about selling the home they now live in, while her husband is already working in another town, she had asked the Lord to give her peace of mind by having a fellow Christian who would normally not phone her call her the coming week.

God hit two birds with one stone: he answered her prayer and mine. I had asked the Lord to fill my tired mind with ideas for an editorial. God must love me too!

My point is this. Too many of us walk around thinking ourselves unworthy of God's love. We don't need to be saved — we already are. We need to be freed from the shackles of negative feelings. As the young woman put it, "Faith and love are more than a feeling, but you can't take feeling out of it."

Sometimes all a person needs to blossom as a Christian is a warm fuzzy feeling that he or she is loved. I have no quote from John Calvin to back me up here, but I do read in Scripture that the God who cares a lot for the squawking sparrows that paint your car with their droppings, considers you and me of greater worth than many of them. In fact, he loves us to bits ... Calvary bits.

BW

Scripture calls homosexual behavior an abomination

Don Baxter's letter "Gays and lesbians deserve better" (CC, May 22), although well written, is not written from a biblical, but from a subjective, humanist perspective.

Whenever the Lord wants to make an important point of interpretation, he refers to the situation at creation; for example, Jesus setting out the truth about divorce, or Paul setting out the teaching about the relationship between men and women.

We can do the same with the teaching about sexuality. In the beginning, God created humankind good — male and female he created them. Then he told them to be fruitful and multiply. How that can ever include homosexual relationships is beyond my understanding.

It is clearly stated in Scripture that "unnatural" relations of men with men, women with women and men with animals are the result of sin and an abomination to God (Rom. 1:18-32). How must we then see those who are predisposed toward these conditions?

I believe that on the basis of Scripture we must regard them in the same way as anyone else who is born with a congenital disease or deformity. We do not regard that as normal, but try in every way to relieve the symptoms or cure the person. When a person has a tendency toward alcoholism, and acts on that to the point that he or she seriously maims or kills someone, we hold him or her responsible and do not call that his or her right as an alcoholic.

When a person is born with a destructive personality disorder, we do not blame that person, nor do we allow him or her a free rein to act that out in our society. No, if necessary, we even go so far as to restrain that person or lock him up. I am not suggesting that anything so drastic is required for homosexual or bisexual persons, but neither should their acting out of their disorder be considered normal or right. As a matter of fact, it is incumbent on the Christian to call a spade a spade and call homosexual behavior sin, because that is what God calls it, whether we like it or not.

In this world we are still under the shadow of sin. And all sin is an abomination to God, whether it is pride or greed or improper behavior. These require repentance and spiritual renewal — not indulgence and tolerance.

Having once had to deal with the destructive habit of tobacco, I am aware of the difficulty of overcoming such an addiction and will support anyone who is honestly trying to come to grips with his or her destructive behavior. But let us not call it normal or right because we are not willing to let God be Lord in this area of our life and engage in a real spiritual battle for that.

Let the homosexual person who submits to his or her unnatural tendencies be careful that, in denying that there is a serious problem, he or she is not destroyed in God's judgment.

Martin Kaldeway
Brockville, Ont.

Commitment does not purify sin

Michael Geisterfer's response to your editorial of May 1 begs the following question: As he takes "strong exception" to your inference "that gays and lesbians lead immoral lives, unprincipled lives," what would his response be to God when he declares the practice of homosexuality to be "detestable" (NIV) or "abominable" (RSV) and declares it sin?

Commitment and troth do not change this fact. To imply that it does is [preaching] Satan's gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ, out of true love, offers salvation to the repentant sinner.

Michael Geisterfer's vision suffers from a strong delusion. How much better to read Len Colp's article on faulty sex education in the May 15 issue of CC.

Mr. and Mrs. C.S. Douma
Brampton, Ont.

Don't poke fun at blessed dimension

I am somewhat offended by the start of your May 15 editorial "Ascension Act — Jesus exit stage right." It feels as if you sit in judgment on the Ascension Day sermon of one pastor and on his mispronunciation.

Please remember that many beautiful followers of Jesus have grown in faith and knowledge of their Lord and Savior, who sits at the right hand of our Father in heaven, through such preaching and mispronunciation, and live daily by the "dimension" you articulated in your article.

Your slight made me remember my own struggle in the early 50s when I was called upon to read an English sermon every other Sunday.

Personally, I am ever so thankful for the preachers who left their comfortable pulpits [in the Netherlands] and followed us as "strangers in a strange land." Today I often feel jubilant when I see how the Lord made something beautiful from our own struggling beginnings.

Let's build the future, not on perceived negatives from the past, but on the positive results God has wrought among us by his marvelous grace.

Ted Ferwerda
Guelph, Ont.

Thinkbit

"Prayers [shouldn't be] a flurry of words which will mar the inner stillness you must cultivate in order to maintain your equilibrium, but to receive the word from God which shall undoubtedly come."

From *Ultimate Prizes* by Susan Howatch

When a child complains

In response to Bill Van Dyk's article "A modern-day witch hunt" (CC May 15), the following:

A certain stepdaughter was mad that she had been grounded by her stepfather. She took it out on him and went at night to a girlfriend's house. At her house, she told the friend and her mother that she had been sexually abused by her stepfather.

The mother of her friend took both girls, aged 13, to the local Children's Aid Society. The story was repeated there and Children's Aid phoned the police.

A policeman came to the fellow's workplace (this often results in instant dismissal), and the stepfather was arrested. He could make one phone call. He called me to say: "Get me a lawyer, fast!"

He was released the next day, pending a trial. Three years later, there were four days of trial and the jury acquitted the man. The harsh treatment of an innocent man, the expense of a trial — it all happens many times since a child can tell a story and it is believed.

K. Teddy Smits
Belleville, Ont.

In a hurry to get your message across? Why not send your letters to the editor by e-mail to: cceditor@aol.com

No Issue Next Week

In keeping with our schedule (see box on this page), *Christian Courier* will not be publishing an issue on June 12. Our next issue will be June 19.

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Nellie's story

Elbert van Donkersgoed

I have an abiding respect for those who are willing to think and act "outside the box" that most of us need in order to feel comfortable. They are among the most creative people among us.

One such was Rudy Falk, surgeon at Toronto General and director of a private cancer clinic bearing his name. Dr. Falk passed away in March. He left a legacy of searching for an alternative cancer treatment to high doses of chemotherapy and radiation — which he believed too toxic.

He was enough of a maverick to treat cancer patients long after other doctors had proposed no further medical intervention. Let me illustrate.

It was April 14, 1989, when Nellie went for a routine visit (she thought) to a brain cancer specialist at Hamilton's Henderson Hospital to check out why her tongue was partially paralyzed. The neuro-oncologist ordered a neck collar, assigned Nellie to a hospital bed in the palliative care ward and when pressed, described a brain tumor, which could at any moment catapult her into paralysis.

A few days later, a battery of tests came back — all bad. Malignant melanoma had spread to Nellie's liver, lungs, kidney — and brain. The professionals advised that there were no effective therapies for melanoma cancer and proposed to keep her comfortable with morphine for the remaining two to six weeks of her life.

Alternative approach

The professionals in Hamilton were puzzled when family, with the help of a former family doctor, moved Nellie to the rural hospital in Palmerston. But there the family doctor was able to stabilize Nellie and send her home to Guelph under the home-care program.

Stability made possible the question: Is there any therapy for widespread melanoma worth trying, conventional or otherwise?

Where other professionals had concluded that there was no hope, the Falk Oncology Centre agreed to see Nellie. Dr. Falk agreed to treat Nellie on the condition that there be an encouraging response after an initial five-day session.

Five intense days

There followed five days of experimental drugs, intravenous medication, low-dose chemotherapy, heat treatments and prayer. Home base was the Delta Chelsea in downtown Toronto, with a daily trek by wheelchair to Dr. Falk's outpatient clinic.

The melanoma responded to the protocol. Little by little, the tumours began to shrink. Nellie's immune system fought its way back into control. A year and a half of therapy followed. In 1991 Dr. Falk wrote: "She appears to be in complete remission."

There has been no sign of melanoma since.

I thank God for the Rudy Falk's who can think and act in ways beyond what most of us are capable or willing — especially since he was so instrumental in restoring Nellie to health.

Nellie is my wife.

Elbert van Donkersgoed is executive director of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. Elbert and Nellie live in Guelph, Ont.

Fly the Cat and making sacrifices

Marian den Boer

"So they offered a sacrifice according to what was required in the law of the Lord--either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." Luke 2:24 (NLT)

Early one evening the bald-headed neighbor with the big moustache, the one who lives three doors down, came knocking, "Yours is the little black and white cat?" he asked.

"Yes," I admitted proudly.

"Well, the neighbors would appreciate it if you kept him as an indoor cat."

My neighbor proceeded to tell me exactly what our cat, Fly, had been doing. It seems Fly had an outdoor routine to which we, his family, were oblivious. He would walk up to the door two houses over and paw around outside until he had the little dog inside running in circles barking. Then Fly would head over to our moustached neighbor's house and do the same thing for his dog.

Bird murderer

Fly's biggest crime took place six houses down the street. The lady there spends many delightful hours attracting birds to her yard. She feeds them and can boast of attracting a whole array of birds including cardinals. Well, Fly would crouch behind her bushes — he actually murdered one of her doves.

"Our cat doesn't even have claws!" I exclaimed to the neighbor with the big moustache. "We had no idea. We certainly don't want him making a nuisance of himself," I blurted on.

I decided then and there to keep Fly inside. After two days I was rethinking my decision. If Fly happened to be within streaking distance of an opening door, chances are he'd escape and one of us would be up to five minutes recapturing him. If we managed to keep him housebound for more than half a day, he would hone his stalking skills ambushing our ankles.

I began letting Fly out the back door for short periods during the middle of the day.

Maybe he only does the dog and bird routine in the evening, I mused to myself. *Or maybe he won't go down the street if he starts out in the back yard. Doesn't the cat have a right to go outside? Is there a bylaw against it?*

I know I should talk to my neighbors about this. I should at least make amends with the bird lady.

The way I'm trying to appease my neighbors from a distance, without talking to them, reminds me of the way I sometimes relate to God. It's so easy to make plans and try to serve God as I think best without really communicating with him. When I pray I have to remind myself to listen for and expect an answer. Even though I'd rather be walking as the Holy Spirit directs, I can get quite comfortable making sacrifices according to the law.

Marian den Boer lives with her husband, Marty, six children and one cat in Hamilton, Ont.

Fly the Cat, at three months old, in more innocent days, with Christina the Baby at five months. Fly and Christina are now mischievous 1 1/2-year-olds.

Maranatha Homes Burlington, Ont.

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For our Calendar of Events, please turn to page 19

Book Review

Psalter Hymnal handbook will be a constant companion

Marian Van Til

Psalter Hymnal Handbook

Emily R. Brink and Bert Polman, editors.

Grand Rapids, Mich.: CRC Publications, 1998. 921 pp. ISBN 1-56212-269-X. $59.95 (US), $80.95 (Cdn).

The workable but rather mundane title of this book gives no inkling of the riches it contains. I would have preferred the title *Psalter Hymnal Companion* because that's what this book is, not only to the psalter/hymnal it is meant to accompany and amplify, but because that's what it will be to the pastor, musician, worship or music committee member, officebearer or just plain Christian Reformed church goer who makes regular use of it.

A new friend

A companion (whether human, animal or book) is a friend whose company is rewarding and on whom one comes to rely. I predict companion status, achieved quickly, for this masterful reference work which contains background information for every one of the 641 psalms and hymns in the CRC's 1987 edition of its communal songbook, the *Psalter Hymnal.*

The concise, easily readable write-ups for each psalm and hymn provide information on the song's text (poets, other sources, biblical references for each stanza), tune (composer, brief history, performance suggestions), and liturgical use.

That commentary, divided as the *Psalter Hymnal* is into the Psalms, (numbers 1-150), Bible Songs (151-236) and Hymns (237-641), makes up the bulk of this book. But a variety of other treasures here await delving into as well.

Living history

Editors Emily Brink and Bert Polman were assisted by 14 other contributors. Brink is the Christian Reformed Church's permanent music and liturgy editor; Polman is a professor of music at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario. Valuing the CRC's Calvinist heritage, and perhaps trying to move to stop its erosion, Brink and Polman have gathered historical essays for Part 1 of the handbook: three essays on the Psalms, one on the Bible songs and five on the hymns.

These short commentaries, however, are far from dry tomes about times and topics long dead. They explain music of the church that is still very much alive and which links us to the church of all ages (though it is decreasingly used in some circles).

In language clear and interesting Brink and Polman and three other writers (Calvin Stapert, Roy Hopp and Jack Reiffer) produce, as it were, a concise history of both psalmody and hymnody from Bible times to the present, from Reformation Geneva to Continental Europe, to North America in general, and then specifically to the Christian Reformed Church.

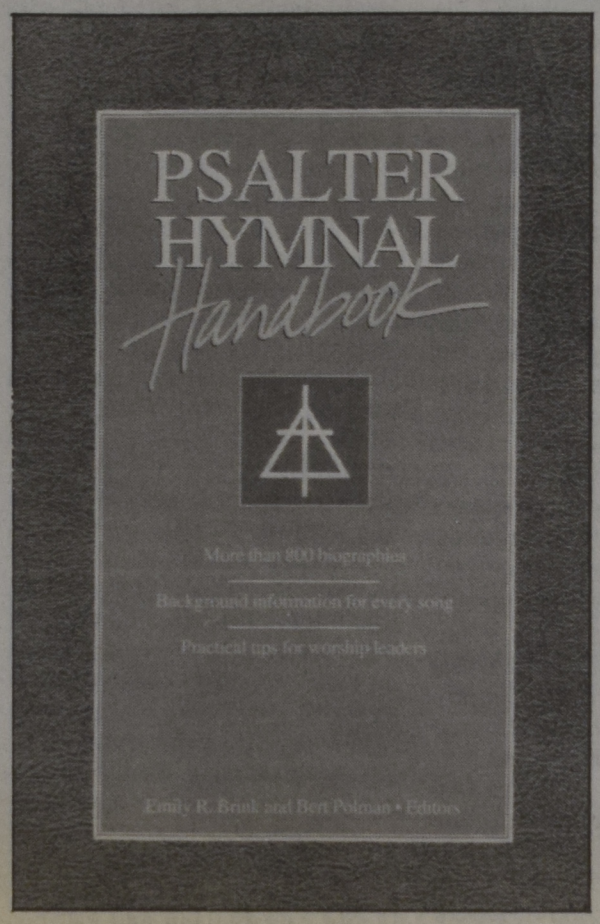
Anyone concerned with not only the music but the worship of the church, including current trends in worship renewal, would do well to read these essays. And any CRC member who reads these pieces will come away with a better understanding of his or her church and its musical/liturgical place in Christendom.

'Family background' on what you confess

An equally great (and to me, unexpected) service of this handbook is its commentaries on the ecumenical creeds, confessions and CRC liturgical forms.

In the section called "Ecumenical Creeds and Doctrinal Standards" the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian creeds, the *Belgic Confession, Canons of Dort* and *Heidelberg Catechism* are considered (written by Harry Boonstra, Henry Zwaanstra, Fred Klooster and Donald Sinnema). The commentary on the *Contemporary Testimony* appears in the final "Liturgical Forms and Resources" section.

One- to three-page write-ups provide background on the origins and content of the texts involved, and, as with each psalm and hymn, there are short comments on their liturgical use. Curiously, in this section there is also a brief essay (by Robert De Moor) about the Form of Subscription for officebearers, which form an overture to this



year's synod hopes to see revised.

In the final section (written by David Diephouse, Carl Kromminga and Bert Polman), the texts of the various sacramental liturgies (baptism and Lord's Supper), those for other rites (ordination/installation of officebearers, profession of faith, excommunication/re-admission) and a page called "Responsive Readings of the Law" are given a context.

The somewhat strange physical arrangement here reflects how the elements on which these essays comment are arranged in the *Psalter Hymnal* itself.

Indexes encourage discovery

That final section, however, still does not exhaust what this companion has to offer. In the excellent tradition started by Brink in the 1987 *Psalter Hymnal,* there are, to cap everything off, a set of indexes to make the heart of any pastor or musician glad. They encourage discovery.

Besides the normal first line/title, tune name, author/composer/sources indexes and a general index to the essays, there are the more unusual but very helpful glossary of musical and liturgical terms; "*Heidelberg Catechism:* Song Suggestions"; and a kind of "harmony of the Confessions" which cross-references the *Belgic Confession* and the *Canons of Dort* to the *Heidelberg Catechism.*

For those who value following the church year in worship, including using a lectionary (a three-year schedule of Scripture readings used in the Lutheran, Anglican, Catholic and various other traditions), there is "The *Revised Common Lectionary* with Related Songs; and — another very useful idea — the dates in the liturgical calendar until the year 2040, allowing one to know when the First Sunday of Advent, Ash Wednesday (which begins Lent), Easter, Ascension and Pentecost will occur during those years.

If that sounds somewhat "high church," one nevertheless gets the impression that balance was always the goal. There is also, for example, an index of "Songs with Guitar Chords."

Except for the title and the few minor quirks mentioned, one is hard-put to find anything *wrong* with this book. It will be a superb tool for making the *Psalter Hymnal* as accessible as possible.

One can only hope that those congregations which have less than enthusiastically embraced the 1987 *Psalter Hymnal* might give this handbook a look and begin to realize what riches they're missing in the book it is meant to accompany.

New website examines how Canadian media covers faith

WINNIPEG, Man. (CUSJ) — People who are interested in how the Canadian media covers faith can now learn more about the subject of the World Wide Web.

"Faith and Media" is the name of the first Web site about how Canadian journalists cover faith. The site is sponsored by the Faith and Media Conference, which is being held June 7-9 at Carleton University School of Journalism in Ottawa.

"There doesn't seem to be any other site like it on the web," says John Longhurst, who created the site. "A search of the web shows a few sites which contain an article or two about the subject, but this is the only one wholly devoted to the issue."

Visitors to the site will find a number of articles and essays about how the Canadian media covers faith. Topics include "Coverage of Religion Falls Short;" "Bridging the Gap Between Churches and Media;" "The Future of Religious Reporting" and a study which examines whether journalists pay insufficient attention to the role of spirituality and organized religion in Canadian society and culture.

Uncharted territory

One of the difficulties in creating the site was finding material, Longhurst says. "This is mostly uncharted territory in Canada — very little has been written on this subject."

The site also contains information about the Conference, which will bring together journalists and representatives from various faith groups from across the country to talk about the issue. Keynote speaker is Peggy Wehmeyer of ABC World News Tonight. Wehmeyer is the only religious correspondent on U.S. network broadcast news.

The Conference is sponsored by the Canadian Association of Journalists, Carleton University School of Journalism and a variety of Canadian faith groups and media outlets. Cost of the conference is $175, plus GST and PST.

Faith and the Media can be found at www.escape.ca/~jclong

U.S. House passes religious persecution bill by wide majority

Opposition came from Clinton, big business

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — Despite strong opposition from the Clinton administration and from business lobbies, the U.S. House of Representatives voted May 14 to require the United States to impose economic sanctions against companies that practice religious persecution. The Freedom from Religious Persecution Act passed by an overwhelming 375-41 vote.

'Sends a message'

Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), who sponsored the House bill, said its passage "sends a message to those around the world [who] are being persecuted for their faith that we are speaking out for them, that there is hope that persecution of people of faith will not be tolerated."

In the week before the bill was passed, Wolf used the Republican weekly radio address to speak out against religious persecution. Wolf cited examples of people being tortured or imprisoned for their beliefs, and said, "Many around the world are enduring these hardships simply because they practice their faith. They endure mostly in silence and away from the public spotlight and with little hope for a brighter tomorrow."

Under Wolf's bill, the U.S. is required to cut off all but humanitarian aid to countries practicing religious persecution, and to oppose international loans to such countries.

Misguided repercussions possible

A White House analysis concluded that the bill "could lead to misguided repercussions against minority religious groups perceived as causing a deterioration of relations with the United States."

Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.) called the bill "well-intentioned" but said it "could do very serious harm to U.S. national interests. It forces the President to do business with other countries on the basis of a single standard and would sharply reduce his ability to manage foreign policy."

A similar bill enjoys broad support in the Senate. The Senate version of the bill also requires sanctions, but gives the President more leeway in imposing punitive measures, based on the severity of the offense.

Even the House bill provides some flexibility. It would permit the President to waive sanctions in the interest of national security, or in cases where the objective of combatting religious persecution would be better served by suspending punishment.

The bill enjoys broad support among evangelicals, the U.S. Catholic bishops and some Jewish groups.

"American foreign policy should reflect what our charter documents say are our foremost values — the protection of inalienable liberties, the first of which is religious freedom," said Steven T. McFarland, director of the Christian Legal Society's Center for Law and Religious Freedom.

Council of Churches opposed

Some who voted against the bill said it doesn't go far enough. Rep. Mark Sanford (R-S.C.) said the bill would permit exemptions for egregious offenders including China and Saudi Arabia. "The biggest perpetrators would be waived," he said. "That belittles or marginalizes the whole concept of religious persecution."

Other opponents said the bill wrongly singled out religious persecution for special treatment. Some business and industry leaders also opposed the measure, saying that sanctions would benefit foreign companies at the expense of firms in the U.S.

The National Council of Churches (NCC) opposed the bill. Dr. Albert Pennybacker, NCC associate general secretary for public policy, said, "We believe sanctions should be a matter of thoughtful, multilateral last resort, to be imposed only in consultation with the people they are intended to help."

There are already U.S. laws in place requiring sanctions against countries which engage in drug trafficking, arms sales or human rights abuses.

Gay CRC minister loses ordination status

Darrell Todd Maurina

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (URNS) — Meeting May 21 at Woodlawn Christian Reformed Church on the Calvin College campus, Classis Grand Rapids East voted by a 22 to six margin to release Lucas, the first openly gay Christian Reformed minister, from the denomination's ministry.

Lucas remains a member in good standing of Eastern Avenue CRC but will no longer be authorized to preach, baptize or administer communion. Lucas says he will continue his current full-time work with the AWARE ("As We ARE") gay support ministry and part-time chaplaincy at Spectrum Health's downtown Grand Rapids campus, formerly known as Butterworth Hospital.

Homosexuality dominated the discussion at classis, though the official vote dealt only with the technical issue that Lucas has been ordained for nine years without having received a ministerial call.

Classis Grand Rapids East and Eastern Avenue CRC defended him up until a year ago, noting that he is personally celibate, had not publicly contradicted the CRC's stance against homosexual practice, and was working toward developing his gay support ministry into a post to which he could be called.

Last year, however, Lucas indicated after discussions with his council at Eastern Avenue that he believes "faithful, committed, permanent, same-sex unions can be an experience of God's grace and within God's will for those who find they are not able to maintain a life of celibacy."

Muddy waters

AWARE subsequently issued a similar statement. As a result, Eastern Avenue decided four days before last September's classis meeting that it could no longer endorse his ordination. Rather than immediately terminating Lucas's ordination, classis postponed the decision until January, and then postponed the decision again until the May session.

"The waters are being greatly muddied by the unfortunate words we hear of 'deposing,' 'defrocking,' or other discipline," said Rev. Scott Hoezee of Calvin CRC in Grand Rapids. "This is a procedural matter, not a discipline matter, and we need to be very, very clear about that."

Lucas strongly disagreed. "Bottom line, that's not a reason," said Lucas. "There is a reason that I didn't have a call, because of what I currently believe on faithful, committed, permanent same-sex unions. This says as much about the church as it says about me."

Most delegates, however, focused on the issue of Lucas' views. "I think you've put me as a delegate to the classis in a bind," said Rev. Carl Kammeraad of Neland Avenue CRC. "By your affirmation of same-sex unions, you have departed from the position of the Christian Reformed Church and lost the support of your local council. Now you're asking me and this classis to ignore your local church's decision. I can't do that."

Others concurred that classis faced a difficult decision but urged different actions. "It seems we are between a rock and a hard place; the rock is Jim's public stand on same-sex unions, and the hard place is we need Jim," said Rev. Roger Van Harn of Grace CRC, urging that classis reaffirm opposition to same-sex unions while still retaining Lucas's ordination.

No firm position?

Those voices didn't prevail at classis, nor did Lucas's repeated statements that he hadn't come to a firm position on same-sex unions.

"Jim has said he is open to changing his mind," said Calvin Seminary professor and Eastern Avenue member Dr. Melvin Hugen. "It is the opinion of our council that he has come to a settled position. Jim has stated publicly, not in private but publicly, that he finds the position of the Christian Reformed Church to be doing damage, would make his ministry to gays impossible, and to be poisonous to him personally. That certainly sounds as if he has come to a settled position."

Rejection or a formality?

Speaking after the vote, Lucas said he didn't plan to leave the CRC, but that the classis action had left him in shock and sent a bad message to Christian Reformed gays.

"It felt like someone has just slammed a major door in my face, and it hurts," said Lucas. "My message to gays is that even though it may seem a part of the church is rejecting you, God has not rejected you, and God loves you more than you can possibly imagine."

The man who made the formal motion to release Lucas from the ministry thought otherwise. "I think the message this says is very clear," said Rev. Gerald Zandstra of Seymour CRC. "Nine years is the limit you can be in the ministry without a call. Any other message is a misreading; this is only a church order matter," continued Zandstra. "Classis did what it had to do."

Scottish bishop calls Bible 'our greatest danger'

GLASGOW, Scotland (EP) — The Right Rev. Richard Holloway, primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, called the Bible "our greatest danger." Speaking to a London conference on homosexuality and the church, Holloway said failure to see the Bible as "flawed and fallible" leads to "violent homophobia," and called for new interpretations of Scripture. Speaking of the Bible, he said, "We have recently abandoned the text's tyranny over women, as we abandoned its justification of slavery, and soon we'll abandon its ignorant misunderstanding of homosexuality."

Traditionalists in the church have called on bishops to accept the authority of Scripture or face expulsion.

Want to work in missions but don't know where to go?

Try the 'FingerTip' database

BURNABY, B.C. (EFC) — Canadians considering involvement in missions will now be able to find all the information they need about mission opportunities with the addition of FingerTip to the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's Task Force for Global Mission Internet site. The task force has taken over the database from Student Mission Advance (SMA) following that organization's recent decision to disband.

Task force chair Geoff Tunnicliffe says the FingerTip database will connect "mission opportunities with those who can actually respond to those needs," adding that the Internet is "a great medium to help mobilize the young people of the 'Net generation.'"

Student Mission Advance (SMA), of Hamilton, Ont., began developing FingerTip in 1994 as a resource for young Canadians considering involvement in global missions. FingerTip has a unique searchable database of more than 1,200 specific mission opportunities in more than 30 mission agencies.

Diverse criteria

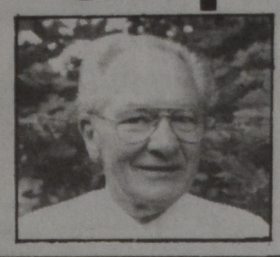
The database can provide reports by country, date, agency, duration or type of service, and match all the opportunities with an individual's specific criteria. Each opportunity comes with e-mail or Internet site links to the agencies, making it easy to contact the agency for further information. Agencies which subscribe to this service can post or edit an unlimited number of opportunity listings.

Tunnicliffe says that later this summer the task force will enhance FingerTip with a number of new features such as a chronological missions events calendar, including short term missions projects.

Fingertip's website address is: **http://www.globalmission.org/fingertip.htm.**

To have or to hope

Chapter & Verse



Wayne Brouwer
● Andrew Kuyvenhoven
Laura Smit
Al Wolters

According to a Greek story, the gods visited a woman named Pandora and entrusted a box to her. Pandora did not know what was in the box and the gods warned her not to open it. Of course, she could not resist the temptation. She peeked into the box and, WHOOSH, all the evils that bring harm to humankind escaped. When Pandora quickly closed the box, only "Hope" remained.

The story means to tell us that, though human life is crushed with misery hope remains intact.

Hope is survival power. As long as we hope we continue to live. But when hope is gone, our battery is dead. We can live without food for a while, without drink for a little while, but we cannot live without something to look forward to.

What kind of hope do people have? The human experience knows that the end of our lives is tragic and disgraceful. We must give up both knowledge and wealth. We are destined to die and return to a handful of dirt. Irrepressible Hope keeps saying that someday somebody may invent something that might change our lot. Thus far, however, nothing is more common than sin and death.

Strongest motivation

The Christian religion agrees that hope is our strongest motivation. But it also teaches that human hope deceives us. Christians have a new hope. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (Peter 1:3). The resurrection of Christ is our corporate birth into a *living hope*. Our hope is living because Christ is living. Christians assemble on the first day of the week because that is their birth date. On the first day of the week we began to have a hope that does not put to shame. We Christians strive to "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give a reason for the hope that [we] have" (Peter 3:15).

All who are born of women live by hope. And all human beings must be born again. Otherwise their hope is idle and their lives are vain.

Having been born again, we still live by hope — a hope that's focused on Christ.

Two temptations

There are two movements today that tend to deceive us into thinking that we live by what we *have* instead of by what we *hope*.

The first one is a spiritual movement that wants us to think that, since the Holy Spirit is with us, we can already have the kind of health and holiness that's promised for the age to come. That movement is not entirely new (cf. 1 Cor. 4:8ff) but widely propagated today. When faced with this temptation we must remember that the Holy Spirit is a "down payment" of "first fruit" of the future gift. He is God's encouragement that we should live by hope!

The second temptation to think that having today is better than hoping for tomorrow is secularism. All of us have become rich. And we don't know yet if the church can shake this temptor.

The church of Christ lives and dies in hope. This hope has endured persecutions, poverty and pain. But we have no proof as yet that the church can endure prosperity and wealth. If we have much, we tend to live by what we have and not by what we hope. "Who hopes for what he already has?" (Rom.8:24).

On the other hand, most of us still suffer before we die, in spite of our riches and our medical technology. Perhaps that's God's hidden grace that undresses us so that we continue to hope for what he alone can give.

Andrew Kuyvenhoven was a pastor in several Christian Reformed churches in Canada during 20 years and served another 15 years in denominational functions in Grand Rapids, Mich., where he now lives in retirement.

Syd Hielema promoted on Bavinck thesis

CC FILES

Syd Hielema

Bert Witvoet

TORONTO — Syd Hielema successfully defended his doctoral thesis on "Herman Bavinck's Eschatological Understanding of Redemption" on April 24. He had studied at the Toronto School of Theology under Prof. John Webster.

A somewhat late bloomer in terms of academic studies, Hielema, 44, has been an instructor of theology at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, since 1996. The son of CC columnist Bert Hielema and his wife, Denise, who live in Tweed, Ont., Syd married Evelyn Kuntz, the daughter of another CC columnist, Jacob Kuntz and his wife, Maria. Syd and Evelyn have three children. Syd Hielema was also a CC columnist for a while and has written several other articles for *Christian Courier* and various publications.

After Dr. John Bolt of Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich., Hielema is the second Christian Reformed person to write a PhD dissertation on Herman Bavinck. In his thesis, Hielema claims that Bavinck developed an eschatological understanding of redemption in his theology. Bavinck's view contrasts with the creational view of redemption which perceives the end of redemption as a return to the beginning.

Richer significance

Bavinck, says Hielema, also emphasizes creation, but construes history not as a circle returning to the beginning but as an ascending spiral which brings us to a higher plane.

Creation, even in its pre-Fall state, according to Bavinck's view, is characterized by a duality between invisible and visible realities. The sinless Adam and Eve, too, walked by faith and not by sight.

The history of redemption is a progressive movement in which God's transcendence remains as it is while his immanence increases. Jesus Christ, who is the culmination of history, makes God the Father visible, the one who sends the Holy Spirit to begin writing God's law on human hearts.

Hielema claims that the Dutch neo-Calvinist tradition has not clearly recognized Bavinck's understanding, and that Reformed scholars like Gordon J. Spykman and philosopher Albert Wolters, who claim to be influenced by Bavinck, have not done justice to Bavinck's understandings. Bavinck, says Hielema, is able to provide a richer account of the significance of Jesus Christ than these scholars have provided.

Hielema believes that Bavinck's insights provide guidance for understanding the Christian faith in contemporary society characterized by pluralism and relativism.

Before teaching at Dordt College, Hielema was a teacher at Toronto District Christian High School, a youth pastor at Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Newmarket, Ont., and a teaching assistant at Wycliffe College in Toronto. He has a deep interest in music, liturgy and worship.

Send your questions to

Peter and Marja

Confidentiality is assured.

Old wine in new skins

An old African worldview in a new church

PHOTOS: COURTESY JAN BOER

These three Jukun women wear similar clothes to show friendship.

Jan H. Boer

The Christian Reformed Church has poured unparalleled energy into Nigeria: countless sons and daughters as missionaries, millions of dollars, ceaseless prayers. These sons and daughters have told us of unparalleled church growth in Nigeria, especially, but also in other African countries. That's the stuff mission and relief boards report to the church.

However, the last few years, rumblings of another sort have been heard as well. These rumblings have slowly turned into mighty crescendos of violence and death. We remember the Idi Amin debacle of Uganda. More recently we have been hearing of the killings and other horrors in the land of the Hutus and Tutsis.

These drawn-out events have received much attention in the media. The last few years we also hear more and more about major skirmishes in Nigeria. Since these are regional rather than national in scope, they have largely escaped the attention of the international media. If it were not for the fact that these regional clashes deeply involve the constituencies of the churches with which the CRC missionaries have been affiliated, chances are we would not have heard about them either.

How is it possible?

But there they are, for all the world to see, the Hutus and Tutsis as well as the more localized Nigerian violent wars. We shake our heads in disbelief. How are such barbaric acts and cruelties possible between the Christian tribes of Hutus and Tutsis?

We can legitimately ask the same question about the Jukun-Tiv war of the early '90s in Wukari, and the killings, burnings and lootings currently going on in Takum, the centre of Johanna Veenstra country.

The Jukun people of Wukari are largely Christian, as are the Tiv. The former belong to the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN); the latter, to the Church of Christ among the Tiv (NKST — the Tiv-language acronym by which they are known in Nigeria). These are the very churches that have absorbed much of our CRC missionary energies. The Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (RCCN) is an offshoot of the CRCN and claims to be the major beneficiary of Johanna Veenstra.

The Jukuns and Tiv had a full-scale war in the early '90s in which modern weapons were used by Christians to kill countless other Christians, burn each others' villages and even churches where previously they would hold joint services.

Though some attempts for peace were made by at least one of the churches, it had no visible effect. In fact, a highly reliable source has it that the leadership of one of these two churches encouraged that war, if not outrightly helped plan it. And right now, as we write, Christians of the CRCN and RCCN are at each others' throats, killing each other, burning each others' houses and looting the homes of Veenstra's successors, causing them to flee to far-away Jos.

And right now, as we write, Christians of the CRCN and RCCN are at each others' throats, killing each other, burning each others' houses and looting the homes of Veenstra's successors, causing them to flee to far-away Jos.

Western atrocities

How do we account for all these horrible inconsistencies?

As we consider that question, it may be helpful and sobering to recall the many atrocities that have been perpetrated over the centuries by Christians in countries where the gospel has had much more time to take roots than in Rwanda and Nigeria.

I have recently read some books about medieval culture in Great Britain. It is enough to raise one's hands in holy horror to see how bishops and archbishops routinely murdered, oppressed and generally abused their positions for purposes of naked power and wealth.

To come closer to home, the history of near genocide of native Canadians and Americans is too well-documented to deny. The aftermath of black slavery in the U.S. is still very much with us. We think of Stalin's camps of hell in the land of Orthodox churches. We remember the Holocaust in the land of Luther. We have not forgotten the images of recent ethnic cleansing among Orthodox and Catholics in former Yugoslavia. The struggle between Protestants and Catholics in northern Ireland has not yet been resolved.

It's our history

While we may try to console ourselves with the thought that these horrors took place in spite of Christianity, others were consciously based on warped versions of Christianity.

A recent visit to South Africa made me conscious of the fact that "Christian" apartheid was much more cruel than most of us may think. The guillotine of Reformation times cannot be erased from history. If the Crusades no longer constitute an active part of our memory, they are still very much in the consciousness of the Muslim community — a long history of violence, rape, looting, burning and killing in the very name of the Prince of Peace.

So as we seek to explain what is happening in Africa, we do so humbly. We do so in the consciousness that we may be looking at ourselves and our own history. At least parts of the explanation I offer below can also help shed light on the events catalogued above.

Ancient worldview

It is possible to explain much of current African turmoil in terms of economic interests. Some very helpful studies have been published along this line. However, studies that limit themselves to economic considerations do not tell the entire story, often not even the basic one. Besides, in this article I am interested in the religious factors that have contributed to these wars.

Specifically, the issue here is: Why has the Christian faith of the combatants not prevented them from such atrocities?

The answer to this question must be sought in the relationship between the ancient worldview of traditional Africa and the new religion of Christianity. The official religious structures changed and churches emerged all over the place, but at the deeper level of the underlying worldview not much changed for most Africans.

And what was the shape of that worldview? At least two aspects are relevant for this discussion. First, the purpose of African Traditional Religion (ATR) is not to serve God or gods; it is to manipulate the spiritual powers to do the bidding of the people, of the tribe and of the individuals. This manipulation is carried out by a large arsenal of religious rituals.

We have here the very opposite of the Christian religion, which insists that its followers serve God. Spiritual powers serve human beings. The deepest quest is for social harmony and for power. The spiritual world is manipulated so as to satisfy that deep quest.

Millions of Africans, including Nigerians, have moved over to the church. Often they have done so as part of large people movements. People have become dissatisfied with traditional ways. Tradition became an obstacle to progress under the new conditions developed under colonialism.

Religion for profit

The Wukari people, for instance, stubbornly held on to their traditional ways, while Takum, only 50 miles away, had

accepted the church. It was becoming clear that the people of Takum were benefiting from this change in various ways, especially in economics, education and healthcare. When the Wukari people began to recognize how Takum profited from adopting the new ways, they also started to move towards the church in large numbers. Today there is a large Christian community in Wukari, perhaps greater in number than in Takum.

Another example of this same tendency is the ease with which thousands of Nigerians first converted to the church only to move on again, this time to the mosque. The reasons for such spiritual shopping were generally economic or political. A Christian with political or business ambitions could often be bribed by Muslim offers of money or position to make another move.

There are innumerable rich Muslims in Nigeria with a Christian background. And why not? If the purpose of religion is to help you satisfy your ambitions, then such shopping around makes eminent sense. You follow the religion that promises to fulfill your dreams.

Issues of money

The point I am making here is that for many people this was a change in religious structure, but the old worldview remained intact. They expected to use their new religion to gain harmony and power in the modern contemporary setting. For the majority it was not much more than a method to achieve traditional aims in the modern context. It was no more a way to serve God or for self-sacrifice than was the traditional way.

Missionaries and African Christians are often at loggerheads, especially over issues of money and power. Often missionaries do not understand the African church leaders and pastors. These leaders seem so materialistic and power hungry to missionaries. Abuse of office and misuse of church finance seem to be the order of the day. They seem to show so little self-sacrifice.

There are various reasons for the struggle referred to above. One is simply that the African concept of money and its use are inherently different from and in some ways contrary to Western concepts. An underlying factor is the difference in the psychology of overwhelming poverty and the psychology of comparative wealth.

No interest in power?

However, another major factor is that the basic worldview of many Africans has not changed. Now the church structure, church position, church money and church ritual are to serve as the new and modern source of power and harmony, especially power. The strong desire for power and money is based on that largely unchanged worldview.

A recent visit to South Africa made me conscious of the fact that "Christian" apartheid was much more cruel than most of us may think.

Some years ago, the position of CRC mission leader in Nigeria was vacant. A Nigerian church leader encouraged me to go for this position. He was surprised when I told him I was not interested in administration. How could I not desire the power that goes with that position? he asked. I told him I was not interested in power, an answer he found hard to understand.

Bribery and corruption are a feature of human life in all cultures. They are part of the human condition. But they are extremely prevalent in Nigeria. The reason, I submit, must again be sought in the traditional worldview underlying the Christian veneer. That worldview provides no motivation to oppose bribery and corruption. In fact, it encourages it. If bribery and corruption are the way to individual or tribal power, then those are the things to pursue. At that point, the demands of the newly adopted faith will have to be ignored. Religion should not inhibit my progress or reduce my power; it should serve to increase it.

The tribe comes first

Tribalism is another characteristic for which Africa is famous. In the traditional worldview, one's identity is deeply rooted in the tribe. Benny Vander Walt of Potchefstroom University, a long-time foe of aparheid, refers repeatedly to Africa's communalism — an over-emphasis on the community.

All members of the ethnic group are obligated to advance the harmony and power of the group. This is a loyalty that stops at the border of the tribe. One has little or no obligation to members of other ethnic groups. In fact, any harm done to such members is acceptable as long as it enhances the well-being of your own tribe.

The introduction of the traditional worldview into the church, automatically brings bribery, corruption and tribalism as well. Why have the churches failed to nip bribery and corruption in the bud? To do so would go against the traditional view of the purpose of good religion. Why is tribalism so rampant in the church? Because the traditional view of community or communalism still reigns in the church.

The new religion and the church's power are useful in so far as they enhance the well-being of the tribe. They will be ignored if they prove inconvenient to the tribe. As inconsistent as all this may look to the missionary, it is perfectly consistent with the traditional worldview applied to the new situation. Africa has always taken over from the West selectively and on its own terms.

Wukari Christian dancers celebrate Christmas in native costume.

Many true Christians

I must hurry to prevent a possible misinterpretation of what has been said so far. I am definitely not suggesting that all African Christians and all African church leaders have retained this traditional worldview. There are many millions who have truly converted to Christ. I have many close friends among them.

Many have suffered deeply because they gave themselves to Christ. They have sacrificed much, some even their lives. The church would not be there today without them. I salute these Christians and have learned much from them. They shake their heads and shed tears as much as the rest of us. Unfortunately, they are not yet the majority.

To come closer to home, the history of near genocide of native Canadians and Americans is too well-documented to deny.

Have the efforts of both African and Western missionaries been thwarted by the old wine in the new skins? By no means. The church is there. The Bible is available in many languages. The structures and the other tools of God for the completion of the task have been firmly established, even if they are constantly changing. There are millions of truly converted Christians. There has been and continues to be a tremendous harvest.

Patience required

However, human nature being what it is, we must be patient. The mills of God grind slowly. The leaven of the Holy Spirit is busily penetrating the hearts of more and more people. Negative aspects of traditional culture and even of that traditional worldview itself are under continuous attack by that Spirit. God is chipping away at them.

The same is true, of course, for the church in North America as much as it is in Africa. We are not all that different from each other. Whether the worldview that militates against and slows down the full appropriation of the gospel is animistic African or, as is frequently the case amongst us, pagan Greek, both are old wine in new skins.

Dr. Jan H. Boer is a freelance researcher and former missionary to Nigeria. He lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Opinion

Sound systems: blessing or curse?

John Derksen

I would like to add something to the timely remarks in a letter by J. Visser of Winnipeg which were printed in CC some weeks ago (March 20) under the headline "About Carpets and Sound Systems in Church Buildings."

There are quite a number of churches that have sound problems, some more, some less serious. If this is the case it would be a good idea to do without sound equipment for a while.

"It is a very serious matter when the needs of the spoken word fall by the wayside, no matter how."

Sound weird? Just think of those preachers in huge cathedrals who used to manage to bring the message across without the benefit of the gadgets we have. We are spoiled. We have become addicted to modern technology; so much, indeed, that we think we cannot do without it. We have become slaves of the monsters we have created, and if we do not take control, they will; and then they will become a curse instead of a blessing.

One Sunday when I entered church, the person at the door, who was in charge of the sound system, took me aside and told me that I should find a place in front because the sound system did not work. I appreciated his concern but still decided to sit, as always, in the back. After the service many people I talked to said that they did not miss a word. It was very quiet during the sermon and, for once, people were really listening! What beautiful co-operation.

Only partly technical

Some believe that the sound system is technical. This is partly true, but that is not the biggest problem. Technical problems can be solved. There is something far more serious: the popular notions about sound: for instance, that an expensive outfit with a whole range of knobs, levers and flashing lights and lots of pep is better than a cheaper outfit; or that more loudspeakers will solve the problem; or that you need stereo, woofers and tweeters and microphones that catch sound from all around.

I have heard them all. I've even heard it said that after the installation of pews sound will improve; and someone else told me that thinner wires to the loudspeakers will produce finer sound. Everybody seems to be an expert, but instead of coming up with solutions they become part of the problem.

I agree with Mr. Visser that in the long run people get used to a bad sound system and accept it as normal. That is the worst that can happen. And in such conditions, since they lose too much of the sermon, they give up. They sit through the sermon as a necessary part of worship just waiting for the minister to say "Amen" or just to stop talking.

Focus on the spoken word

Occasionally I have met people who left the church, not because they were indifferent, but because they felt the need for spiritual food for themselves and their children. Ignore the problem and you get a generation of church goers that is used to hearing and not listening, that no longer understands God's word and what the church stands for (Matt. 13:10-17).

Mr. Visser advises that echos may be combatted with damping materials. That may work, but in many instances that is not a complete solution.

Take a critical look at your equipment. Don't say that it is the most sophisticated equipment money can buy. If it doesn't fill the need, very likely that equipment was not designed for speech.

It is a very serious matter when the needs of the spoken word fall by the wayside, no matter how. Paul wrote: "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). That is the channel God has chosen to reach us with the Good News. This warrants a much wider approach in which not only a local church, but the whole denomination, is involved.

Cultivate experts

Years ago I had the opportunity to talk to a Roman Catholic clergyman while travelling by train. He told me that all decisions related to church buildings are made by specially appointed experts, most of them clergy. He himself was appointed, likely by his bishop, to design and supervise heating systems.

CC FILES

"In the long run people get used to a bad sound system and accept it as normal. That is the worst that can happen."

He drew my attention because he was reading a technical book which I did not expect from a priest. But I must admit that they understand better than we how vital material things are to those who come to worship.

Jesus taught us first to pray for our daily bread, which is material, and after this to pray for forgiveness of sins and protection against Satan's temptation. That's our spiritual need. You cannot separate them.

Different from many other denominations, we in the Christian Reformed Church believe that our congregations are complete units by themselves and therefore have the power to make their own decisions without approval from major assemblies like classes or synod. So we deal with matters in congregational meetings.

This works well in many instances, but not if expertise is required. In one church of which I was a member were some who managed to change the architect's design of the heating system while the building of a new church was in an advanced stage. Most of the heating ducts were already in place.

Since the issue caused turmoil in the congregation, the architect was called in to meet with the council and the members who had objections. However, he was not able to convince them that his design was good. As a result we had to cope for years with heating problems in a cold basement, and the final solution of this big mistake did not come cheap.

In another congregation, I have tried for years to convince those who are in charge that the sound system is not adequate, and I am not the only one who complains. Much is done, I have been told, but nothing has changed.

I do not blame anyone particularly, because every individual member has the right to voice his or her opinion, right or wrong. The result is chaos. This method makes it virtually impossible to solve this kind of problem. That is actually the biggest problem we in the Christian Reformed Church — and in other churches with similar structures — face, not the technical part.

Bring it to classis

It would be a step in the right direction if we were to bring serious sound problems to the attention of our classis. There may be more congregations plagued by the same problems. There may also be churches which have no problems. This way we can help each other.

Some may object to this because it is a technical matter, and as such, should not be on the agenda. However, it is not of the same nature as buying an organ or piano or adding a classroom. It affects the very existence of the church. This should be of concern to every member, every congregation, classis and synod. Classis may not be able to present a solution, but can help because it has more resources than a local congregation does. Perhaps some experts can be found and appointed to assist all churches in a particular classis that have similar problems.

Ask for congregational evaluation

A second note of advice I want to present is: Why not get the whole congregation involved? For instance, ask everyone to pick up a survey at the entrance and report how they would rate the sound. It would be helpful to add a sketch of the auditorium in which they can mark the place where they were seated.

Don't expect them to come up with solutions, but let them help identify the cause and extent of the problem. Ultimately it is not a committee or even the elders who determine whether the sound system is good enough, but the hearers, all of them, young and old. Let them get involved, also the lonely visitor in the last row.

In Prov. 24:6 it says, in a different context, but a similar situation: "After all, you must make careful plans before you fight a battle, and the more good advice you get, the more likely you are to win" (Good News Bible).

John Carl Derksen is a retired Christian Reformed pastor who lives in Kitchener, Ont.

Two weeks that were

Bert Hielema

THE BOMB IS BACK and money is always in the news. Perhaps the two are related as the lust for money is the root of all evil and since nuclear bombs are evil, there must be a connection. Is nuclear power also evil? That question came up at the recent environment conference at The King's College in Edmonton: one of the registered participants is employed by AECL, the Atomic Energy Canada Limited. He and I had a friendly disagreement. I told him that in 1976 when AECL wanted to bury nuclear waste in our area, Tweed-Madoc, I spearheaded a protest movement which led to a backing down by the Atomic Energy people. We agreed to continue the discussion via e-mail.

IT IS GENERALLY assumed that India got a start on its nuclear bombs from the Canadian Candu reactor. The head of the CIA, which has as its specific mandate to combat nuclear proliferation, heard the news about India on CNN. Perhaps the CIA should subsidize CNN, which seems to have a better intelligence network than the CIA. Besides, the CIA reportedly costs the U.S. tax payers some $30 billion per year.

PAKISTAN AND INDIA have had three wars. Who knows? The next one might involve A-bombs. Asia and the Bomb: modern Asia begins with the atomic bombing of Japan. Ever since then, Asia has been in turmoil. First the Dutch in Indonesia. Then the Korean War. MacArthur wanted to drop a Big One on North Korea and China, and then Vietnam, where the French asked the Americans to use an A-bomb on the Viet Cong. Then the U.S. got into the act. Also Cambodia and the "killing fields." And now the Bomb has hit the Asian economies....

WITH ECONOMIES collapsing everywhere in Asia, I wonder whether there is a connection between monetary bankruptcy and military muscle-flexing. Recent history in Asia has its basis in war, nuclear manoeuvres, economic distortions and political choices, all of which are dangerously intertwined. Pretty volatile stuff.

EQUALLY VOLATILE is the financial scene, almost everywhere. Russian banks now charge 150 per cent interest on loans while desperately trying to save the ruble from collapse. The stock market there lost 40 per cent of its value in one month. Canadian banks reported maximum profits for the first quarter of 1998, mainly due to their mutual funds business. It used to be that banks made their money on loans, but these have become a sideline.

BANKS HERE ARE playing with fire, just as India and Pakistan are doing. The nuclear banking bombs are the so-called "derivatives." Here financial whiz kids use complex mathematical models to predict how markets will behave under certain assumptions.

Someday, perhaps soon, something unexpected will happen, not factored into the forecast. The Asian collapse never was supposed to happen. Also, the Indian bomb tests were not predicted. Yet banks all over the world have $25 trillion riding on certain assumptions which may be totally erroneous, an amount larger than the size of the U.S. European and Japanese economies combined, some $10 trillion (yes, $10,000,000,000,000) in derivatives are coming due this year. In other words, just as governments increasingly get their revenue from gambling, so do the banks, which are supposed to play it safe with our money.

IN A NEW BOOK called *Apocalypse Roulette: The Lethal World of Derivatives*, the author, Richard Thomson, a former merchant banker, says, "Derivatives have turned the financial markets into a high-tech, international, 24-hour casino."

"Oh," you will say, "here goes Bert Hielema again with his dire predictions." Well, I have culled this information from an issue of *Time* a few weeks ago. Concludes that article: "With Indonesia aflame, a virtual depression in Japan..., the Asian economic crisis is far from over. In the worst-case scenario, one or more large derivatives may default and set off a chain reaction of failures. ... We are into an age of global financial risk."

IS THIS A BAD NEWS week? Well, there is good news for men about prostate cancer detection. A so-called PSA test (Prostate-Specific Antigens) reduces the risk of early death by 69 per cent. There is also bad news for men: while female admissions for depression have fallen, male admissions have risen. Reason: a massive decline in male jobs which involve muscle power (mining, stevedores, steelmaking) and a massive increase in jobs which involve the transfer of information, at which women are simply better than men — better listeners, better with people.

I GUESS IT'S a bad news week. Even *The Economist* was affected. In an article called "The Sea," this paper makes the correct observation that the First Fall (of Adam and Eve) led to earth pollution. We are now in what it calls the Second Fall, which is leading to sea pollution.

Usually the expression "sea change" means a better condition, a substantial positive change. We now are seeing a sea change for the worse. Where we now use up to 40 per cent of the output of the land — which has changed the earth irrevocably by this exploitation, people take as much as 35 per cent of the output of the seas, which will lead to a similar disaster. And then there is global warming with all its uncertainties.

THIRTEEN OF THE world's 16 cities with more than 10 million people are on the coast. The real damage to the seas comes from a myriad small parts that add up to one big whole. A city of five million releases 42 million litres of petroleum products each year, roughly the equivalent of oil spilled by the *Exxon Valdez*, making coastal pollution as serious a problem as climate change.

Come to think of it: to call the planet we live on Earth is something of a misnomer. "Ocean" would be more accurate.

Almost 71 per cent of our planet's surface is covered by sea, precisely the proportion of the human body that is salt water. I am not sure whether God had something special in mind with this. In a sense what water and blood are to a human body, the seas and their fluids are to the earth.

I AM NOT SURE whether the antitrust suit launched by the U.S. government against Microsoft is good or bad news. From what I have noticed, Microsoft, which makes my computers work through its software, usually plays *macrohard* in terms of business tactics, and this has not escaped the American Justice Department. Well, here we have the mother of all legal battles:

The most profitable company in the world versus the most powerful government in the world. Good for lawyers. Had I bought 1,000 shares of Microsoft in 1986, today I would be a millionaire in that stock alone.

Bill Gates has absolute power in his company and is worth about $40 billion. The day the U.S. government launched its suit he lost $1.5 billion in declining share value.

ALL'S WELL THAT ends well. In Egypt the Coptic Church is vibrant, and that in a mostly Islamic country. Church services are packed and once forlorn monasteries bustle with activity. Due to the fanaticism among Moslems, Christians in Egypt have grown more religious, more parochial and more separate from their Muslim neighbors. Perhaps what we need in North America is some open persecution of Christians, which may be easier to take than the insidious undermining of true Christianity, which is a hallmark of our North American brand of Christianity.

Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ont., where he religiously tends his garden and prays for rain.

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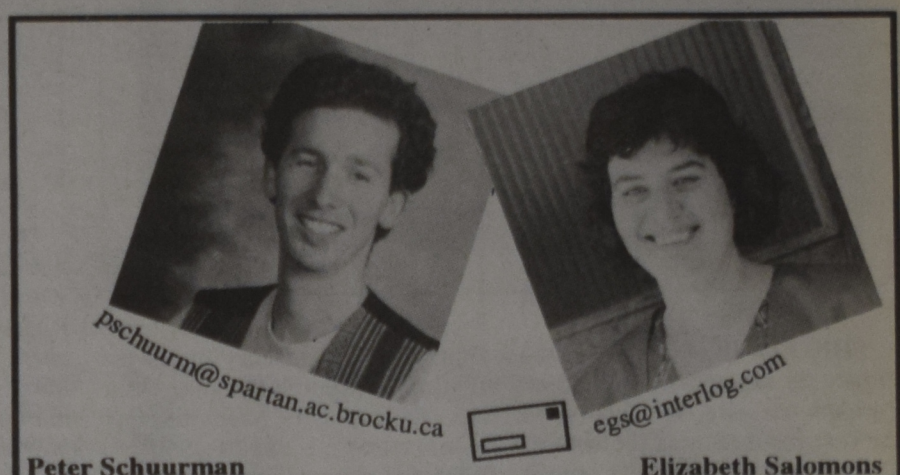

Peter Schuurman **Elizabeth Salomons**

Dear Peter:

A little over a year ago, I was doing some research on the Serbian protesters in Belgrade for a project I was working on for one of my clients. These were the demonstrators who had marched every day for over three months in protest to the annulling of the municipal election results by the Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic in November 1996.

Serbian young people — many who were students at the University of Belgrade — organized their own march that was separate from but parallel to the main march. I found the web site of the student protesters on the Internet where I could follow the written accounts of the daily marches posted to the site, and I contacted the site via e-mail, asking if I could reprint some of the summaries in my article. They were very happy to let me do so as long as I gave them the proper acknowledgement.

I still remember reading that e-mail message when it opened up on my computer screen. It was pretty overwhelming. Until that moment, this was just another news story I was covering —- trying to make sense of it and put it into a context for Canadian students to use in the classroom. But once I had had personal contact with the students in Belgrade the story changed for me.

"The anniversary of Tiananmen Square makes me wonder how many students will die in the next decade protesting injustice — and why is it always the young people who die?"

There were real live people over there marching for something they believed in. It wasn't just a game of playing hooky for them. They were taking a risk by taking to the streets. The police were everywhere, and because Milosevic had already shut down Belgrade's only independent radio station, the students had taken the precaution of setting up several mirror websites in case the authorities tried to shut them down.

As I write this, the news is full of coverage of the student-led riots in Indonesia. The ninth anniversary of Tiananmen Square falls on the same week this letter will be printed. The Indonesian students make me think of the Serbian students. I wonder if any reforms have been made in Serbia and if each of those young people still lives.\The anniversary of Tiananmen Square makes me wonder how many students will die in the next decade protesting injustice — and why is it always the young people who die?

I'm not sure where I'm going with this lament. My day-to-day worries seem so trivial in comparison to the rest of the world's youth. Is it guilt that I'm feeling? If I spare a moment a day to pray for the Indonesian rioters, will that appease my own sense of injustice that I, by the grace of God, was born in a country free of dictators and blessed with democracy?

I guess the question I feel I have to ask myself is: Would I be willing to face a bullet for something I believe in? But because I live in Canada, it's a question I needn't answer. And because I don't have to answer it, I somehow feel inadequate as a human being.

Uneasily yours,
Elizabeth

Dear Elizabeth:

Back in high school I remember reading Pastor Richard Wurmbrand's autobiography *Tortured for His Faith.* In it are graphic descriptions of the horrible physical and psychological torments he was subjected to by his communist captors in Russia. I would lie awake at night wondering if I had it in me to demonstrate the same steadfast faithfulness that he showed in the face of excruciating pain. It's hard to fully appreciate that Christians in Sudan, China, and Indonesia face that question daily.

Political oppression and religious persecution both put our deepest convictions (or lack thereof) to a very clear, severe test. The gravity of these situations cannot be underestimated. I, too, get the feeling that I've been pampered, sheltered, spoiled or undeservingly protected from the horrors of ruthless leaders. You used the term "blessed," and while not to be beaten is certainly better than being beaten, I think we have our own challenges here in the land of the "free."

Don't get me wrong. I wish more people in our country and church were passionate about injustices they can't see. I was impressed to read how Christian Reformed World Missions responded to the slaughter in Sierra Leone back in May, and how the church in North America mobilized to pray for that country. We have a disproportionate share of the world's resources, and prayer is the least we do.

Ironically, Mother Teresa said once that it was not India that was poor. "The West is poor," she said, "for it is dying from a lack of love."

What did she mean? Is there something in the spirit of this continent that is horribly wrong? Some sort of subtle oppression that does not manifest itself in clubs or swords?

There are different ways of controlling people: one is through coercion and pain, and an other is through seduction and pleasure. I heard a professor in the States say once that "mass media is to a democracy what violence is to a dictatorship."

Wow. That's a bold statement, and more than a little exaggerated. But still, I wonder if fascist torturers are necessary when you have the pleasure and fun of Walt Disney World to amuse you. People don't worry — much less get passionate and angry about — global injustice when they are laughing over the final Seinfeld episode, a show the writers openly declare is about "nothing." We are free to consume whatever is available on the market. But what good is it to possess all the commercial goods available at Walmart, and forfeit your soul?

I guess I'm trying to cultivate humility for our own state of affairs. I probably will, Lord willing, never face the barrel of an automatic weapon. But the automatic weapons in this world were manufactured somewhere peaceful, and it might have been on a continent where hoards of people face a colorful screen to watch NHL playoffs.

From my comfy chair,
Peter

Elizabeth Salomons is a freelance editor who lives in Toronto and is a member of First CRC there. Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Church's chaplain at Brock University. He's a member of Jubilee CRC in St. Catharines.

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We're back!

Dear Readers:

Four months later, 16 1/2 weeks later, precisely 116 days later, we're back! On Thursday, April 30, when the clock showed the midnight hour, we looked at each other and said, "Our sabbatical is over."

When we describe our sabbatical experience to others we like to say, "We had our plans, but God had a better plan." That's because we pictured things going a certain way, but things changed radically.

The biggest change in plans occurred when our daughter, a Calvin College senior, came to us at the end of August with the news that she was pregnant. After working this through, we made the decision to spend the first two months of our sabbatical in Grand Rapids to enable her to take a January course during her ninth month and to coach her through the delivery of her child in February.

COURTESY PETER AND MARJA SLOFSTRA

Jasmine Slofstra at three months. Peter and Marja characterize their granddaughter this way: "She makes us laugh."

For two amazing months we lived together as students, taking in conferences, lectures, books, concerts, movies and a wide assortment of worship services. Then, on February 16, Marja's birthday, Jasmine Rachelle Slofstra came into the world, our first grandchild.

As adoptive parents we had never experienced all the things that pregnant couples do. Now we, too, know first-hand what it is to attend prenatal classes, do breathing exercises, and time contractions. Our younger daughter even learned how to cut an umbilical cord. When we read Psalm 139:13-18 together later that day, we were overwhelmed by God's creativity.

Two themes

After settling our daughter and her new child back home, we headed South. More churches and more books, but also time for exploring the beaches and the landmarks of Florida. This was our opportunity to rest and travel, and we did plenty of both, as we made it down to the Keys and up to Boston.

As the days went by we kept a journal, recording our observations and gleaning themes that would guide us as we picked up our ministry again at our church. These sabbatical reflections fell into two specific categories.

The first could be entitled "Helpful Improvements" This included such things as making better use of ushers; reducing our ratio of leaders/children; improving the time and flow of our services; recruiting more volunteers to cook our Family Night meals; spending less time in meetings and more time in ministry; developing a kids' church during the evening service. We're talking about the kinds of ideas observed elsewhere which can improve what we already have or do.

The second category, the more important one, could be called "Focusing Our Vision." Basic biblical concepts such as service, modesty, simplicity and personal integrity grabbed us anew. Our desire to be a fellowship that experiences spiritual healing was strengthened. We have returned with a stronger emphasis on reaching out to those on the fringes and in the community around our church. In all of this we want to be asking what God loves instead of what we like.

It made a difference

Has the sabbatical made a difference? Absolutely. We drew apart, experienced life in a new way, took the time to observe and savor, and found renewal during a season of reduced expectations. Last year, the anticipation of the sabbatical gave us courage for a busy fall. The sabbatical itself stands out as a richly rewarding period of rest and re-commitment. And as we head into our second decade at Jubilee we find ourselves making a commitment to stay at a time when we might otherwise be tempted to go.

To our colleagues in ministry we want to say: ask your church for a sabbatical policy to which you can apply in your seventh year. To the churches we want to say: please make it possible for your pastor to experience a sabbatical. He or she (as well as the spouse, if married) will thank you, and your church will be enriched by the spiritually revived person it gets back.

As to the column, we have come home to four questions which we'll begin tackling in CC two weeks from today. We appreciate the fact that our advisory panel published several questions and answers in our absence.

Now we invite you to write to us, in the hope that the Lord will again bless our efforts to provide you with some helpful advice. As of today, we are "IN."

Write to: P & M, 16 Kimbermount Drive, St. Catharines, ON L2N 5V6.

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Alan Vandermaas, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

10,000 Villages on the road to financial recovery

NEW HAMBURG, Ont. — After two years of significant losses, Ten Thousand Villages Canada's financial report improved dramatically this year, showing a modest surplus.

Ten Thousand Villages is a non-profit job creation program of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). It has a network of about 40 permanent stores in Canada plus a fleet of seasonal stores that open before Christmas. In addition, over 100 special weekend sales take place across the country, from $500 efforts in country church basements to a $70,000 sale at Toronto's Harbourfront.

New stores helped

The organization was plagued by high levels of old inventory the past few years, making it difficult to free up money to buy new items, says director Doug Dirks.

"Last year we sold off tons of old inventory at huge discounts to get it out of the system," he says. "Our cost of selling the goods was high in relation to what we could charge for it and we lost about $600,000."

With the old inventory gone, Ten Thousand Villages was able to re-stock with new items which it sold at better prices this past year (ending February 28) resulting in a surplus of $40,000.

"What helped too was that we got several new stores started — in Waterloo, Stratford and Moncton — and there were a bunch of seasonal stores during the Christmas season all across the country."

2,300 jobs

Dirks estimates sales this past year created about 2,300 jobs for artisans overseas. "The volunteers who work in Ten Thousand Villages stores have contributed immensely to increased income, better education and health care for the artisans and their families."

He adds, "Every time I travel to visit artisans I'm impressed by the progress they make. It feels good to be making at least a small contribution to their improving livelihood."

He tells the story of a family workshop in Karachi, Pakistan that makes marble and onyx products. When Dirks first met them in 1990, the father was working and living in a small two room rented building and had two employees and two grinding and polishing machines.

Since then he has bought a larger building about two blocks away which serves as his home and workshop. He now employs 15 people and owns six grinding and polishing machines. His son is attending a local Christian high school and will, they hope, go on to college — which would be a dream come true.

Meaningful work, fair pay

"Our mission of providing meaningful and fairly paid work for artisans in Third World villages also continues to draw in new customers and volunteers," said Dirks. A woman in North Battleford said with tears in her eyes that she'd never heard of fair trade until she discovered Ten Thousand Villages, and promptly signed herself and her sister up to volunteer.

There are more changes planned for the organization. "We're working on starting new stores in the Toronto and Halifax areas. We're adding over 400 new products to our line in the next six months and we're controlling costs and inventory so we can, we hope, generate a small surplus each year.

"We need to generate a surplus so we can finance new growth. New growth is what generates new work for artisans who otherwise don't have any work or not nearly enough."

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b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

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NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS

We offer a one-year subscription for only $25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the *Christian Courier* and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose $25.00 and the couple's correct address.

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E-mail: ccadverts@aol.com

Please note:

There will be **no issue** on

JUNE 12, 1998

Birthdays

VAN BUUREN VAN GEEST MIEDEMA:

Congratulations to Jannetje Van Buuren Van Geest Miedema on her 90th birthday!

Congratulations to our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother

JANNETJE VAN BUUREN VAN GEEST MIEDEMA

on the occasion of her 90th birthday on June 24, 1998!

We give thanks to God for this special day! Her daily prayers for her loved ones are a great blessing to us!

"For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him" (Matt. 6:8b).

Len & Lenie Van Geest
Simen & Corry Eygenraam
Gerry & Wilma Jonkheer
Ralph & Jenny Suk
Al & Gerda Zietsma
Max & Judy Van Geest
Case & Marian Van Geest
Bill & Ann Van Geest

29 grandchildren and 31 great-grandchildren.

Also celebrating in the Netherlands is her twin sister, Co, who was born first!

Home address: Tabitha Homes, 99A Scott St., St. Catharines, ON L2N 1G8

Anniversaries

With love in our hearts, we wish to congratulate our dear parents

JOHN and TENA (PRINS) ELLEN

on their 60th wedding anniversary on June 24, 1998.

God is so good!

Avlyn & Jack VandenBorn
Joan & Dick Roeters
Jane & Ralph Bruinsma
Carol Nieboer
George & Geri Ellen
Norman & Shelley Ellen
Timothy & Moira Ellen

19 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Mailing address: 5255-50 St., Lacombe, AB T4L 1H7

1953 June 3 1998

Wedding text: "For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end" (Ps.48:14).

With gratitude to God, we are pleased to announce the 45th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

CORNELIS and JOHANNA TIMMERMAN
(nee SCHOLTEN)

It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless them and be near to them.

With much love and appreciation from your family,

John & Yvonne Timmerman — Alma, Ont.
Lori, Karen, Mark,
Carla (with Jesus), Bryan
Harry & Joan Timmerman — St. George, Ont.
Jennifer & Randal (fiancé)
Stephanie, Ashley, Jaclyn
Grace & Erwin Raaber — Pickering, Ont.
Christopher
Jean & Paul Koomneef — Winona, Ont.
Jolene, Daniel, Jestina
Ron & Shirley Timmerman — Arthur, Ont.
Alicia, Derek
Marilyn & Bert Hogeveen — Caistor Centre, Ont.
Amber, Chad, Jazmine

Home address: R.R. #1, Caistor Centre, ON L0R 1E0

Anniversaries

1958 June 6 1998
Edmonton Edmonton
Alta. Alta.

BILL and DIXIE VANDEN BORN
(nee WIERENGA)

are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary. Together with our children and grandchildren, we praise our God for His faithfulness and blessings during these 40 years together.

Karen Vanden Born — Calgary
Mark & Debbie Huyser-Wierenga — Edmonton
Lucas, Maria, Abigail
Ann Vanden Born & Duncan Gish (fiancé) — Edmonton
Joan & Andrew Geisterfer — Edmonton
Zachariah, Samuel, Benjamin
Elaine Vanden Born — Calgary

Address: 14011-89 A Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5R 4S4

Teachers

FRUITLAND, Ont: Fruitland John Knox Memorial Chr. School invites applications for a **37.5 per cent part-time Administrative Relief Teacher** for the 1998-1999 school year. The ideal candidate will possess a valid provincial or state teacher certificate, a Christian School Teacher Certificate (CSTC) and have a few years of successful teaching experience in Grade 6 to 8. Persons interested in this position should contact **Mr. J. de Jager, Principal, at (905) 643-2460** in order to receive application forms. Applications will be received until the position has been filled.

Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Calls extended:

— Nobleford, Alta., Rev. Richard de Lange of St. Catharines, Ont.

New addresses:

— Rev. Mark Verbruggen, 66 Standish St., Georgetown, ON L7G 5V7

— Rev. Esler L. Shuart, c/o Charlottetown, P.E., CRC, 153A Mount Edward Rd., Charlottetown, PE C1A 5T1 (temporary May 17 - July 29).

Personal

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COTTAGE IN HOLTEN

in scenic Holten (Holland).
Contact: **Andy Borger**
(905) 623-6049

Classifieds

Anniversaries

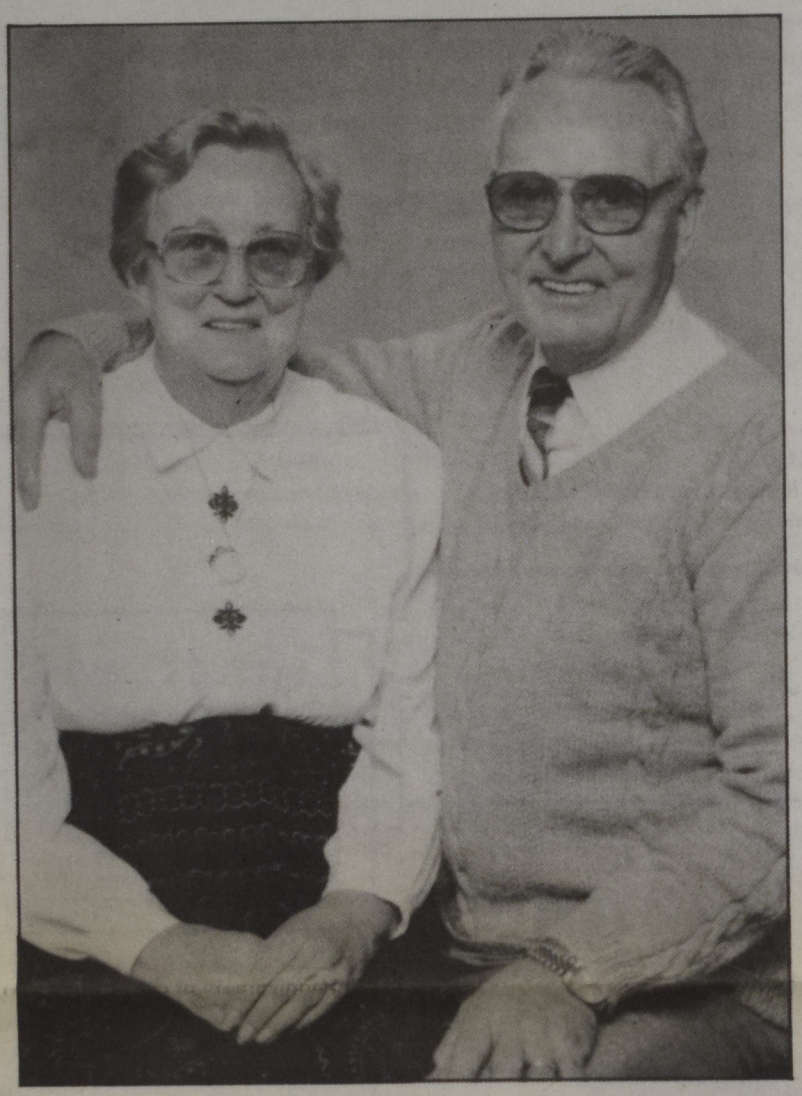
1948 June 18 1998

"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" (Deut. 31:8).

With gratitude to God, we are pleased to announce the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

JOHN and CLASINA KUIPERY
(nee DE JONG)

With love from your family:
Dick & Arlene Kuipery — St. Catharines, Ont.
Elizabeth, Christina, Suzanne, Laura, Timothy
Martha & Pierre Sjaarda — St. Ann's, Ont.
Barbara, Anthony, Karen, Terence, Yvonne, Calvin, Jennifer, David, Andrew, Vanessa
Alice & Ian Brennan — St. John, N.B.
Alex, Patrick, Christopher
Joe & Marg Kuipery — St. Catharines, Ont.
Julie, Sandra
Art & Tina Kuipery — St. Catharines, Ont.
Tara, Kimberley, Jeffery, Lynn-Marie
John & Anita Kuipery — St. Catharines, Ont.
Kevin, Richard, Lisa, Stacey
Yolanda & Paul Epp — St. Catharines, Ont.
Danielle
Eric & Judy Kuipery — St. Catharines, Ont.
Johnathan, Jessica
Philip & Cathy Kuipery — St. Catharines, Ont.
Cassaundra, Miranda, Zachary
Rob & Suzan Kuipery — St. Catharines, Ont.
Emily, Adrian, Rachael
Sylvia — St. Catharines
Home address: 15 Sherman Drive, St. Catharines, ON L2N 2K9



Congratulations to John and Clasina Kuipery on their 50th wedding anniversary!

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Henry and Annie Eigenbrood on their 50th wedding anniversary!

Lisse Frankford
the Neth. Ont.
1948 June 2 1998

"The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24).

With praise and thanksgiving to God, we hope to celebrate with our parents and grandparents

HENRY and ANNIE EIGENBROOD
(nee VAN TOL)

their 50th wedding anniversary. We pray the Lord will continue to bless you and keep you in his loving care.

With love from your children and grandchildren:
Coby & Andre Suurdt — Frankford, Ont.
Jeanette, Shirley, Jonathan, Maurice, Crystal, Linda
Dick & Lucy Eigenbrood — Jarvis, Ont.
Angela, Ruth, Kevin, Kimberley, David
Martin & Fran Eigenbrood — Frankford, Ont.
Frank, Jeremy
Henry & Cindy Eigenbrood — Frankford, Ont.
Joshua, Timothy
Home address: R.R. #1, Frankford, ON K0K 2C0

Obituaries

Midwolde Strathroy
the Neth. Ont.
Aug. 18, 1911 - May 21, 1998

AUKJE BOERSMA
(nee IPEMA)

went to be with her Lord, peacefully, on Ascension Day, May 21, 1998.

Predeceased by her husband, Anne Boersma, June 1980.

Mother of:
Jerry & Louise Boersma
Henry & Hennie Boersma
Irene & Bert Drenth
Ralph & Tina Boersma
Nancy Linker
Pete & Minnie Boersma
Gertie Bruins
John Boersma (predeceased)

Missed by 29 grandchildren, 27 great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

Funeral service was held on May 25, 1998, in Mt. Brydges Chr. Ref. Church, Ont.

Correspondence address:
Pete Boersma, R.R. #5, 8553 Wightman Dr., Mt. Brydges, ON N0L 1W0.

Peterborough Port Perry
Nov. 16, 1955 - May 3, 1998
At Rest

JAMES ARTHUR BURGHGRAEF

Suddenly, as the result of a tragic car accident on Saturday, May 2, 1998, God called Jim home on Sunday, May 3, 1998, at the Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto.

Jim will be deeply missed by his loving wife Sandra, and their four children Melissa, Jessica, Rachel and Joshua.

Beloved son of Fred and Audrey Burghgraef of Courtice, Ont., and brother of:
Anne & Mark Burghgraef - Roques — England
Elizabeth & Roy Terry — Bowmanville, Ont.
Audrey & John Van Belle — Port Perry, Ont.

Uncle Jim will be missed by many nieces and nephews.

Funeral service was held in the Hope Chr. Ref. Church of Port Perry, Ont., on Thursday, May 7, 1998, at 2 p.m., Rev. Norm Sennema officiated.

"For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations" (Ps.100:5).

Because He lives,
we can face tomorrow.

Correspondence address:
F. and A. Burghgraef,
1605 Pebblestone Rd., Courtice, ON L1E 2H1.

More obituaries on page 18...

Obituaries

Beilen Jarvis
Drenthe, the Neth. Ont.
Dec. 1, 1913 - May 23, 1998

"My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor.12:9)

The Lord has taken home His child

GEERT EGGINK

beloved husband, for 57 years, of Henny Eggink (Bakker).

Dear father and grandfather of:
John (deceased 1988) & Jenny — Jarvis
George (Lorianne), Rosalie (Andrew), Hendrea (Torsten), Janet, Brenda (Aaron), Lily (Troy), Mary, Brent
Mary & John Katerberg — Charlie Lake, B.C.
Robert (Elyse), George (Carrie), Heidi (Rod), John (Sara), Martha
Helen & Albert Bosma — Hagersville
Brenda (Ray), Cindy (Ken), Lisa (Jim), Glenn, Mark, Tamara (Gary- fiancé)
Harry & Dianne — Mt. Hope
Garett (Sandra), Lorraine, Matthew, Wesley
Gary & Maria — Jarvis
Alicia (Mark), Leonard, Donna, Pauline, Amanda
Bert & Dorene — St. Ann's
Erica (deceased 1990), Bradley, Christina, Timothy, Charity
George & Betty — Jarvis
Michelle (Bert), Stacey (Chris), Cheryl, Nicole, Tyler
Rita & Ross Gibbons — Hagersville
Marsha (Wayne), Sacha (Mike), Tara, Chuck, Chad
Jack & Debbie — Jarvis
Denise, Angela, Travis, Kelly, Danielle

Also loved by 30 great-grandchildren.

Dear brother of Luchien Barelds of the Netherlands.

The funeral was held on May 27, 1998, at the Ebenezer Chr. Ref. Church, Jarvis, Ont., with Pastor Jeff Janssen officiating.

Correspondence address:
Mrs. Geert Eggink, 72 Townsend Drive, Apt. 117, Brookview, Townsend, ON N0A 1S0

Miscellaneous

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Het vertrouwde adres.

Classifieds

Obituaries

After a short but courageous battle with cancer, our sister-in-law

SIET SLOPSEMA-ELZES

went to be with her Lord and Savior on May 22, 1998, from her home in Sauwerd, Gr., the Neth.

She was the much loved wife and best friend of our brother, Anne Slopsema, and the devoted mother of six children.

Siet was a person who was popular among family, friends and her community and will be missed very much.

Her in-laws:
Janny Wichers-Slopsema &
Henk Wichers —
George, South Africa
Henny Slopsema — Belleville, Ont.
Dirkje Hogewerf-Slopsema — Leek, the Neth.
Sally De Boer-Slopsema &
Henk Slopsema — Blyth, Ont.
Willy Francke — Torrevieja, Spain
Fina Couperus-Slopsema &
Piet Couperus — Trenton, Ont.

Correspondence address:
Mr. A. Slopsema, Stationstraat 11,
9771 AD SAUWERD, Gr.,
the Netherlands.

Job Opportunities

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Kitchener, Ont.

is prayerfully seeking a second

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Please respond **before June 30, 1998.** A detailed job description and congregational profile are available from:

Search Committee
Community CRC
1275 Bleams Rd., R.R. #2, Kitchener, ON N2G 3W5
Phone: (519) 743-9482 or Fax: (519) 743-4434

Miscellaneous

50th Anniversary

The **Aylmer, Ont., Christian Reformed Church** will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 1999. Part of our celebration will be the printing of an Historical Book. We invite former members and pastors to submit any interesting information, pictures, mementos, for this project. Please write or call:

Mrs. Marie Booy, R.R. #2, St. Thomas, ON N5P 3S6
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Miscellaneous

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Hamilton, Ontario
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Fax: (905) 648-2110

Miscellaneous

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Miscellaneous

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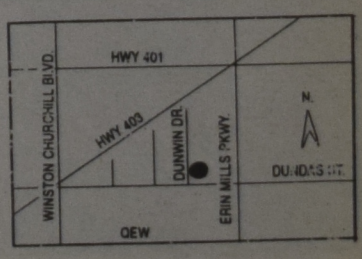

Mississauga, Dundas St. — 2 Blocks W. of Erin Mills Parkway (905) 828-9511

Classifieds

Events | **Miscellaneous**

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

June 6 Organ/harpsichord concert by Jonathan Oldengarm, 7:30 p.m., Benton Baptist Church, **Kitchener**, Ont. Info.: (519) 338-3214.

June 6 Fortieth anniversary celebration of the Calvary CRC, **Ottawa**, Ont. Special service on Sunday at 10 a.m. Info: (613) 821-1911. (#)

June 8-11 Eighth Annual 4-Day Evening Walk (Hikers' Festival). at the Royal Botanical Gardens, **Burlington**, Ont. Registration at RBG Centre each day at 4:30 p.m. For info. call Bill Haartman at (905) 383-6319.

June 10 "Hollandse Dag," 10 a.m., Community Centre, **Moorefield**, Ont. Info.: (519) 638-2053. (#)

June 10 "Hollandse Dag," 10 a.m., First CRC, **Kingston**, Ont. Speaker: Rev. Allan Groen. Info.: (613) 384-2493.

June 11 Noon-hour organ recital by Jonathan Oldengarm, St. Paul's Anglican (Bloor & Jarvis), **Toronto**, Ont. Info.: (519) 338-3214.

June 18 Public reception for Adrian and Wendy Helleman, academic evangelists at Moscow State University, Russia, 7:30 p.m., Willowdale Chr. Ref. Church, 70 Hilda Ave., **Willowdale**, Ont. Info.: (416) 690-4774.

June 20 Timothy Chr. School (Etobicoke) celebrates its 40th anniversary! Open house at 4 p.m. at 28 Elmhurst Dr., **Etobicoke**, Ont. Social time (4 p.m.) and celebration dinner (6.15 p.m.) at Toronto District Christian High, 377 Woodbridge Ave., **Woodbridge**, Ont. Advance ticket sales only! Info.: (416) 741-5770. (#)

June 20 "Grunneger Picnic," 10 a.m., Grand River Conservation Authority Park, **Rockwood**, Ont. For info. contact Harry Klungel at (519) 235-0719. Grunnegs proat'n!

June 21 A major 15-yr. retrospective art exhibition by George Langbroek which includes 50 etchings and drawings. At 2 p.m. at Rodman Hall Arts Centre, a national gallery located at 109 St. Paul Crescent, **St. Catharines**, Ont. Show continues till Sept.11. Info.: (905) 684-2925.

June 24 "Canadian Picnic" of the Lake Alfred Winter Ministry of Florida, 10 a.m., South Side Park, **Woodstock**, Ont. Info.: (519) 421-0431. (#)

June 24 Organ recital by Jonathan Oldengarm, 12:15 p.m., St. Paul's Cathedral, 472 Richmond St., **London**, Ont. Info.: (519) 338-3214.

June 27-28 Fiftieth anniversary celebration of the Community CRC (formerly First CRC), **Kitchener,** Ont. For info. call the church office at (519) 743-9482. (#)

July 2-4 1998 National Pro-Life Conference at Redeemer College, **Ancaster**, Ont. Theme: "The Canadian Quilt: a Life Pattern." Speakers include David Mainse and Patricia Bainbridge. Registration fees: $40/day, $90/three days. Info.: (905) 525-9238 or (905) 528-3065.

July 13-31 ICS/Wycliffe-sponsored Summer School, 229 College St., **Toronto**, Ont. For more info. contact John Franklin at (416) 979-2331. Toll free 1-888-326-5347. E-mail: franklin@ultratech.net

Sept. 26 Toronto District Chr. High School's 35th Anniversary Celebration Dinner! All friends of TDCH are invited to attend this event at the school, **Woodbridge**, Ont. Tickets $35, order through the school office beginning May 1, 1998. Tel. (905) 851-1772.

Oct.11 First CRC, **Owen Sound**, Ont. celebrates its 50th anniversary! Variety program on Friday. Homecoming tea/dinner on Saturday. Special service on Sunday. Info.: Linda DeBoer (519) 371-8192. (#)

Community CRC - Kitchener

(formerly First CRC of Kitchener)

50th Anniversary Celebration

June 27 and 28, 1998

All former members and friends are invited to celebrate with us.
Psalm 98

Saturday, June 27:
5:00-7:00 p.m. Strawberry social/7:30 p.m. Variety Program

Sunday June 28:
10:00 a.m. Service of Celebration

Community Chr. Ref. Church
1275 Bleams Road, Kitchener, ON N2G 3W5
Church Office: (519) 743-9482

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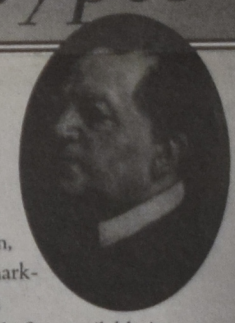
Abraham Kuyper



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News

ICS turns down merger with The King's

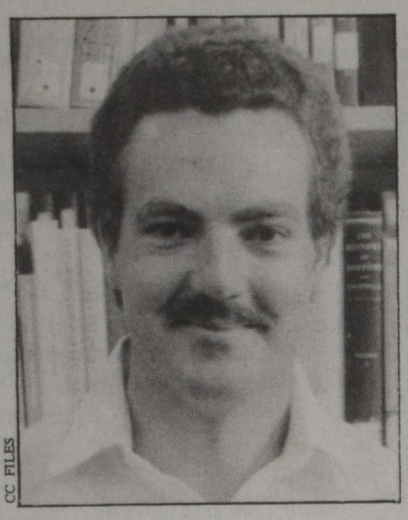
Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — After 18 months of considering a possible merger, The King's University College in Edmonton and the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) in Toronto have decided not to affiliate — a move which is disheartening to people from both institutions.

Although a majority of the board of King's favored the merger, the ICS board of trustees voted it down.

"I was disappointed," says Dr. Keith Ward, vice-president academic and academic dean for The King's. The merger would have been "a real enhancement of our mission.... We had worked very hard for months developing a model that would be a good arrangement." But Ward observes, "We realized there were all kinds of difficulties. We said going into this, No was an acceptable answer."

Although Ward was not directly involved with planning the merger, he met periodically with the planning task force to offer his perspective.



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Harry Fernhout

Wide consultations

"We did consult widely in the university," says Ward. Students, faculty and administrative staff were all asked about the possible merger. "The support was fairly consistent throughout the institution ... but the support was not unanimous," he notes.

In late May, The King's College's board met to vote on the merger proposal and a "strong majority" supported it, says Ward.

But the board of ICS voted down the plan, effectively killing it. Ironically, it was ICS that first came up with the idea of a merger with The King's.

"I was personally a member of the task force," says Harry Fernhout, ICS president. "I've been the primary initiator [at ICS]." Because of this, he felt "a sense of disappointment about the matter," but he respects the ICS board's decision.

In late May, the joint task force set up by The King's and ICS presented an extensive report to each board proposing a two-phase merger process. In the first, the "affiliation phase," the two institutions would remain separate legal entities but would co-operate in various ways and share services on the same campus (in Edmonton).

A later "integration" phase would see The King's and ICS initiate a Christian university with both graduate and undergraduate programs. In this phase, ICS would still function as an identifiable unit with a mandate to serve as a centre of graduate teaching and research, but all ICS faculty would also participate in undergraduate programs.

ICS, like The King's, consulted its students, faculty, staff and also its senate about the possible merger. "Everyone here agrees the model the task force presented was probably the best for this proposal, [but] we as an institution felt it was in our best interest not to pursue it," says Fernhout.

ICS staff worried about move

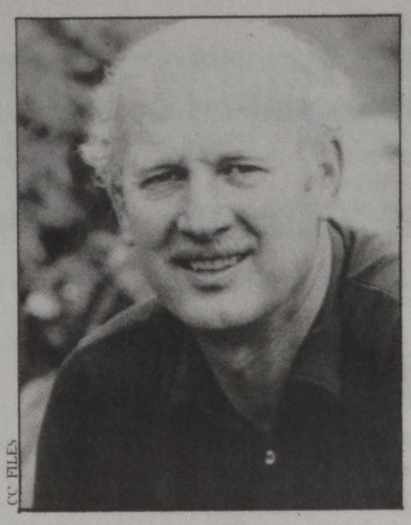
There were several reasons ICS people were uneasy about the proposal. One was "a keen awareness of the personal, professional and institutional upheaval involved in a move [to Edmonton]," states Fernhout.

Another concern was that the faculty of ICS would have had to become involved with developing and teaching new and expanded undergraduate programs, which would have resulted in a dispersion of energy, Fernhout asserts. There was also concern about whether or not ICS could get graduate degree accreditation in Alberta (something ICS still does not have in Ontario).

Affiliation 'off the agenda'

Because of these concerns, ICS concluded that the benefits of the proposed merger would not justify the cost and risk to ICS and its staff.

ICS board chair Ed Den Haan states that while the proposal had clear strengths, ICS concluded "it did not provide sufficient opportunity to advance and develop the Institute's mission in graduate teaching and research."



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Ed Den Haan

But Den Haan stressed that the decision was not a negative assessment of The King's. "All of us at ICS have the deepest respect for The King's, and for the openness and integrity with which The King's engaged in this exploration. Our decision comes with a sense of regret that we did not see our way clear to pursue this relationship."

ICS will not seek to merge with another institution in the near future. "The issue of affiliation is off our agenda for several years," Fernhout asserts. The King's will also not pursue any other plans for affiliations, says its vice-president, Keith Ward.

ICS was first established in 1967 and now has nine full-time faculty members and 35 students. ICS offers master's and doctoral degrees, the latter in co-operation with the Free University of Amsterdam.

The King's opened in Edmonton in 1979 as an undergraduate institution, and is fully accredited by the province of Alberta. Currently, The King's has 500 students, 27 full-time faculty, and about the same number of part-time faculty and staff members.

BERT WITVLIET

The campus of The King's University College: no more affiliations planned.

Thinkbit

"St. Paul is cracked," a security guard in Ottawa's National Art Gallery recently remarked to some of my relatives visiting the wooden statues in the chapel.

From: John Cook in Ottawa, Ont.

News Digest

Mars: tourist Mecca?

TORONTO — A "crisp and bracing" climate, a salmon-pink sky, boundless tracts of unspoiled wilderness, cliffs more than six km high, with sunshine guaranteed all 687 days of the year.... Welcome to Mars!

It can only be a matter of time before people set foot on the Red Planet. So Cadogan, a British publisher of travel guides, is staying ahead of the crowd and off the beaten track with its latest book, *The Travellers' Guide to Mars*, reports the *Toronto Star*.

The paperback covers everything from getting there (the trip, almost 500 million km, takes between six and seven months) to getting around and where to stay.

Brain language

CHICAGO — Studies of deaf children in the U.S. and Taiwan show that even though they are raised worlds apart, the children spontaneously develop a similar type of sign language. Two University of Chicago psychologists reported in *Nature* magazine that totally deaf American and Taiwanese children who had no formal language training developed a similar system of gestures.

Neither system reflected the structures of either Mandarin Chinese or English. Professor Susan Goldin-Meadow, one of the psychologists, says the findings indicate the brain has an inherent capacity to communicate in an orderly way, whether it's through spoken or sign language.

Florida wants marriage/ divorce tutoring

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Call it Marriage 101. Florida lawmakers have sent a bill to Governor Lawton Chiles that would require couples to take a class on wedlock before getting married. If Chiles approves it, Florida would become the first state to make prenuptial tutoring the law.

The measure also requires couples seeking divorce to take similar courses to prepare themselves and their children for the split.

The bill has united legislators from across the political spectrum who say it is a small but significant step toward reducing the number of divorces, reports *Reuters*.